

## TWO DISCOURSES:--

### THE FIRST,

PREACHED JUNE 17. 1798,

Before the Associate Congregation in Paisley,

ON OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF

THE REV. JAMES ALICE,

THEIR SENIOR PASTOR:

### THE SECOND,

PREACHED JULY 1. 1798,

In the High Church of Paisley,

BEFORE THE

FRIENDS OF THE SABBATH SCHOOLS:

(Both published at the Desire of those who heard them delivered)

---

By **W. FERRIER,**

MINISTER OF THE ASSOCIATE CONGREGATION IN PAISLEY.

---

THERE IS ADDED,

A short authenticated Account of the Rise, Progress, and  
Present State of the Sabbath Schools in PAISLEY.

---

PAISLEY:

PRINTED AND SOLD BY NEILSON & WEIR;

Sold also by the other Booksellers in Town; J. Guthrie, J. Ogle, and A.  
Constable, Edinburgh; M. Ogle, and Braith & Reid, Glasgow; J.  
Meuros, Kilmarnock. J. & P. Wilson, Ayr; G. Laird, Greenock; T.  
Hill, G. M'Farlane, and G. Brown, Perth; E. Leslie, and G. Milne,  
Dundee; and W. Knight, Aberdeen.

1798.



TWO DISCOURSES:--

THE FIRST,

PREACHED JUNE 17, 1798,

Before the Associate Congregation in Falmey,

ON OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF

THE REV. JAMES ARICE,

THEIR SENIOR PASTOR;

THE SECOND,

PREACHED JUNE 18, 1798,

In the High Church of Falmey,

BY THE

FRIENDS OF THE SABRANT SCHOOL:

(Each published at the Price of 10 Cents, and sold by the Author.)

## SERMON I.

By W. F. F. F. F.

MINISTER OF THE ASSOCIATE CONGREGATION IN FALMEY.

Printed and sold by W. F. F. F. F.

A Small octavo, 12mo. of the First Edition, 1798.

PAID BY

PRINTED AND SOLD BY W. F. F. F. F.

At the Office of the Author, No. 1, South Street, Falmey, Maine.

# 13421775

TWO DISCOURSES:--

THE FIRST,

PREACHED JUNE 17, 1798,

Before the Associate Congregation in Falmey,

ON OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF

THE REV. JAMES ARICE,

THEIR SENIOR PASTOR;

THE SECOND,

PREACHED JUNE 18, 1798,

In the High Church of Falmey,

BY THE

FRIENDS OF THE SABRANT SCHOOL:

(Each published at the Price of 10 Cents, and sold by the Author.)

## SERMON I.

By W. F. F. F. F.

MINISTER OF THE ASSOCIATE CONGREGATION IN FALMEY.

Printed and sold by W. F. F. F. F.

A Small octavo, 12mo. of the First Edition, 1798.

PAID BY

PRINTED AND SOLD BY W. F. F. F. F.

At the Office of the Author, No. 1, South Street, Falmey, Maine.



THE circumstances in which the following discourse was delivered will appear in its progress. But that the reader who is previously unacquainted with them may at once see its scope, it may not be improper to apprise him, that the Speaker had had the honour and happiness of being associated as colleague in the ministry, for almost eleven years, with the great and good man whose death (in the sixty-sixth year of his age, and forty-second of his ministry) imposed upon him the melancholy duty of addressing their Congregation on the subject of their loss, and his own. It was a collegiate union of which the harmony was not for a moment interrupted. Greatly reluctant as the author was to meet the public eye in this form, he yet could not allow himself to forego for ever an opportunity of erecting his "frail memorial" in honour of a person so highly venerated by him, and of a character than which none can suffer less, or gain more, by a just display.

## SERMON I.

2 Kings ii. 14.

—And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the Lord God of Elijah? And, when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over.

The text is,

He said, WHERE IS THE LORD GOD OF ELIJAH?

**T**HIS is the fervent ejaculation of Elisha, when he had lost Elijah, his spiritual father and tried friend, and his predecessor in the prophetic office.

AMONG all the elders who have obtained a good report through faith, and whose names stand high on the rolls of spotless fame, there is none more venerable than Elijah the Tishbite. He was a  
A person



person altogether extraordinary. He converted among men like a being of a superior order. His entrance on the scene of public life was abrupt and awful; his whole progress was marked by a succession of wonders; and his exit was gloriously triumphant.

Emerging all at once from deep obscurity, he approached and addressed Ahab, king of Israel, like one delegated by God to controul nature, to superintend in part the administration of providence, and to dispense or withhold the influences of heaven: *As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word* \*. He then as suddenly disappeared. In his retirement he was still the same singular and wonderful man. *He went and dwelt by the brook Cherith: and the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening.* Next, we find him entertained in the house of the widow of Zarephath, who, receiving a prophet in the name of a prophet, had indeed a prophet's reward: For the handful of meal in the barrel became an inexhaustible granary, and her little cruse of oil a flowing fountain, for her own and his supply; and, when Death invaded her family, and bereft her of her son, even

Death

\* 1 Kings xvii. 1.

Death was compelled to restore the captive child, and Elijah was the first among men who was empowered to recover the prey from that mighty conqueror. Afterwards, we find him upon Mount Carmel, in full manifestation before the assembled tribes of Israel; *very jealous for the Lord God of hosts* † in the midst of that great congregation; acting wondrously in the utmost plenitude of his prophetic power; and ascertaining by glorious miracles of terror and of mercy that JEHOVAH is God \*. At his prayer, the fire from heaven consumed the sacrifice in the sight of the astonished multitudes: the worshippers of Baal (the most ancient of idols) were confounded: *all the people fell upon their faces* in deep veneration; and Israel confessed his God. Elijah then promised to his repentant people an abundance of rain, which they had long unsuccessfully implored from the vanities of the Gentiles. Forthwith, the aspect of the torrid sky of Canaan began to change. Clouds flying upon the wings of the wind were seen collecting and hovering over its parched fields with their watery stores; and there was a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. But though Elijah had done such wondrous works, all his recompense from men was

cruel

† 1 Kings xix. 14.

\* 1 Kings xviii.



cruel persecution. Queen Jezebel, the insolent and sanguinary patroness of idolatry, sought his life. To escape her resentment, he fled through that great wilderness which Israel had traversed on their march from Egypt. In his flight, an angel ministered to him. And, when he came to *Horeb, the mount of God*, around which Israel assembled to hear the proclamations of Heaven, Elijah, the restorer of the law, was admitted to the high honour which Moses the lawgiver had enjoyed there long before, of holding a solemn interview with *JEHOVAH*. Returning, however, into the region of Samaria, to resume those duties from which no obstacles could long detain him, or dangers deter him, he found himself (what could he less, under the Divine protection?) as safe in the midst of his enemies, as he had been among the rocks, and the caves, and the solitudes of Horeb.

The last of the commands which he received while he was upon the mount with God, was to *anoint Elisha the son of Shaphat to be prophet in his room* \*. But it was the first which he executed: anxious that, for the good of Israel, there might be no chasm in the prophetic succession. And herein he displayed the same fatherly solicitude, and disinterested patriotism, which had formerly

\* 1 Kings xix. 16.

actuated Moses when the termination of his ministry was announced to him by God †.

THE author of the Book of Ecclesiasticus has aptly compared the prophet "Elijah to a fire, and his words to a burning lamp †." But the most resplendent luminaries of the church, and its most seraphic teachers, must quit their stations here below: and, though *the word of the Lord endureth for ever*, they by whom it is spoken are not suffered long to continue. The time drew nigh when great Elijah was to be taken from among men to dwell for ever in the blissful presence of that God for whom he had contended on Carmel, and with whom he had conversed on Horeb; and to mingle with those high celestial beings with whose visitations he had been so familiar upon earth. The manner of his departure was to be no less extraordinary than his life and ministry had been. Of that great event, the chapter of which the text is a part contains a circumstantial narrative. It begins thus: *And it came to pass, when the Lord would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal* \*. On their way, Elijah said to his faithful attendant, *Tarry here, I pray thee; for the Lord hath sent me to Bethel*

† Numb. xxvii. 16.

† Eccles. xlviii. 1.

\* Ver. 1.



thel †. This proposal he made, not to express his own desire but to prove the constancy of Elisha's attachment, to afford him an opportunity of declaring it, and, perhaps, to lead on to some profitable discourse. Elisha protested, *As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee.* Again and again, the same proposal produced the same reply †. *As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee.* And no wonder that he refused to leave him, since it appears that for ten years, and more, they had lived together in cordial union, and uninterrupted harmony; Elisha ever venerating Elijah, and Elijah ever indulgent to Elisha.

That there was to be something very extraordinary in the circumstances of Elijah's departure, as well as that it was then to happen, seems to have been anticipated by the sons of the prophets. Hence, those of them who were at Bethel, and those who were at Jericho, came to Elisha, and said to him, *Knowest thou that the Lord will take thy master from thy head to-day \*?* This was a subject on which he needed no information from them, and on which the fulness of the heart prevented utterance: *Yea, I know it,* said he, *hold ye your peace.* But though they were not permitted to join the illustrious

† Ver. 2.    ‡ Ver. 4, & 6.    \* Ver. 3, & 5.

illustrious travellers, nor indulged with much of their conversation, the sons of the prophets were not forbidden to follow remotely, and to contemplate from afar the scene of wonders which was now to appear. Accordingly, *while they two went on, fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off: and they two stood by Jordan †.* The sons of the prophets marked them with eager attention. While they looked on, *Elijah took his mantle, and wrapt it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground ‡.* To have thus attempted that tremendous passage, argued in Elisha no small degree of attachment to Elijah, and of faith in God. Having taken this last proof of both, Elijah said to Elisha, on the bank of Jordan, which they had now gained, *Ask what I shall do for thee before I be taken from thee \*.* The permission was uncircumscribed, because Elijah well knew that Elisha would request nothing but what it became a prophet to desire, and a prophet to grant. Without hesitation, Elisha named his choice: *I pray thee let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.* How natural was it for this good disciple to covet earnestly the best of the gifts which he had been wont to admire in his master! *Let a double*

† Ver. 7.    ‡ Ver. 8    \* Ver. 9.



*a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.* He did not mean to solicit the gift of prophecy and of miracles in a proportion doubling Elijah's; for of such a measure as that the possibility, or at least the utility, could not well be conceived: but a portion doubling, or greatly exceeding, what had been ordinarily vouchsafed to inspired men. "*Thou hast asked,*" said Elijah, "*a hard thing*†: "*a gift which is not mine to give, a gift singularly excellent, and but seldom indulged to man.*" "*Nevertheless, I prescribe a condition, and give thee a sign; if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so.*" Having made this ample provision for his successor, Elijah had finished all his work on earth: and now he felt his mind disburthened of every care, and disengaged for conversation. *They went on, therefore, and talked.* As they advanced, *behold* there came on to meet them *a chariot of fire, and horses of fire!* a splendid appearance miraculously produced for the occasion, resembling a chariot and horses of fire; resembling fire, not for burning heat, but for radiant brightness. Heaven lent some of its pomp to the earth, to grace the entrance of this illustrious minister of God into those blessed regions which his name and his fame had reached long before. This glorious machine

† Ver. 10.

machine was sent, and the translation rendered conspicuous, not for Elijah's sake alone, who, with as much advantage to himself might have gone invisibly to heaven; nor for the sake of those celestials whom he was about to join, intelligences who are not captivated with outward show: But, first, for the sake of Elisha, to whom the sight must needs have proved very confirming; for the sake also of the sons of the prophets still viewing from beyond Jordan, who were thus made witnesses of the great event; and, especially, for the sake of the ignorant, infidel, idolatrous and profane men of that generation, who might recognise in this grand occurrence a new and striking proof of the reality of another world, a demonstration of the future existence of the body as well as of the soul, a sure pledge of the marked distinction which is hereafter to be made between the righteous and the wicked, and a glorious example of the munificence of God in rewarding those who, by their fidelity to religion, and usefulness to men, have honoured him in their times. The chariot of fire which met the prophets, *parted them both asunder.* The tenderest connexions on earth must be dissolved. Elijah and Elisha must part: and it was fit that he who had first borne the burden and heat of the day, should be the first to enter into the joy of his Lord.

B

While,



While, therefore, Elisha was left upon the earth, *Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.* "He was taken up," says the son of Sirach, "in a whirlwind of fire\*." In this glorious career he passed the aerial regions; and thence, doubtless without any such accompaniment, he ascended into the heaven of heavens. Angels, we may believe, convoyed him thither; and conducted him there, till he came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before Him, to receive that high approbation and welcome which consummates the felicity of the just; *Well done, good and faithful servant.*

When Elijah went up, *Elisha saw it*; and thus he had the pledge of obtaining his great request. *He saw it, and he cried, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof; my best friend, Israel's best defence."*—an exclamation strongly expressive of his inextinguishable affection for the departing prophet, of his sense of his own and Israel's loss, and of his having beheld the specified sign which secured to him the parting blessing. We may believe that, like the Disciples gazing up into heaven when Christ was received into glory, Elisha anxiously followed with his eyes the ascending pomp, till clouds or distance put it beyond

\* Eccles. xlviii. 9.

beyond his view. *And he saw him no more. And he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.* Although he had observed and understood the various occurrences which had announced Elijah's departure, although the manner of it proved it to be great gain to the translated saint, and although the circumstance of his having beheld it, assured him that to himself it would be followed with an accession of high gifts from God, and of high honours from men; yet, at the final disappearance of one so great and good, so beloved and revered, all the amiable sensibilities of nature were touched, every generous and tender feeling within him was wounded, and Elisha's heart was wrung with the parting pang. *And he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.*

All that Elijah left behind him was the upper garment which he had been accustomed to wear. Perhaps it was the same which he cast upon Elisha when he consecrated him the Prophet Elect of Israel. We are told in the narrative, that *it fell from him.* It fell from him when he began his ascent to that happier country, where he was not to need it for concealment, for ornament, or for defence. *It fell from him,* we may presume, at the moment of that glorious transformation which prepared him for the place of his future residence,



fidence, and which shall be exemplified in the saints who shall be found alive at *the coming of the Lord* \*. Elisha gathered it up as a precious remain. *He took up also*, says the scripture, *the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan* †.—*He went back*: retracing now, in pensive solitude, and with slow and interrupted steps, the path which he had so lately trode at the side of his Elijah. *He went back* to rejoin the world and the church militant with which he was still connected, and to mingle in the scenes of active life in which it was his duty to be still conversant. *He went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan*. *He stood*, perhaps, upon the very spot where he had asked and obtained the parting blessing. *He stood* eyeing the full flowing stream on which his illustrious friend had but now performed the last of his mighty works. *He stood* revolving deep in his breast the past, the present, and the future. Many tender and strong emotions struggled within him. He felt, besides, a very unusual impulse. He was prompted to repass Jordan as he had come over it, and now, for the first time, to try his influence with Omnipotence. It was the spirit of Elijah beginning to move Elisha. At length, the agitations of his mind and heart, his

\* 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52. † Ver. 13.

regrets and his desires were too mighty for restraint. In the height of prophetic rapture, *he took the mantle of Elijah, and smote the waters*: and in smiting them, poured forth his soul in the vehement aspiration of the text, pronouncing at once the name of Elijah, and of Elijah's God; WHERE IS THE LORD GOD OF ELIJAH? He names Elijah; but he invokes Elijah's God. He utters not the language of doubt and distrust, but of faith and fervent desire: *Where is the Lord God of Elijah?* or, *Where is the Lord God of Elijah, even himself?*

To display the spirit and the references of these words, is now the object of this discourse. This ejaculatory exclamation, then, may be considered,

I. In its reference to Elijah, who is named in it, and from whom God himself is here denominated:

II. In its reference to Elisha's own peculiar circumstances, when he uttered it:

III. In its reference to the congregation of Israel, among whom Elijah had lately ministered, and among whom Elisha was henceforth to minister alone: And,

IV. More generally, as expressive and exemplary of that recurrence to God which is so congenial



genial and consolatory to a devout mind, in every trying vicissitude of life.

I. The exclamation plainly indicates that, on his way from the scene of the translation, and now on the bank of Jordan, Elisha was impressed with the highest veneration for his departed friend, as a man indisputably and eminently connected with God. Had he not strongly felt this impression, he would not have addressed the object of his adoration by the title of *the Lord God of Elijah*.

*The Lord God of Elijah!* While Elisha uttered these words he was reviewing the past with a mind attentive and ardent, and full of the remembrance of Elijah as one who, while he lived among men, had been singularly *a man of God*.

On the one hand, Elijah was a man who had devoted himself to God. Had it not been so, the appellation here given to the Divinity had been impertinent in itself, and insulting to him. For he refuses to be called the God of those who depart from him in heart, or in works deny him. But he had been the supreme object of Elijah's faith, love, hope, adoration and obedience. In his service Elijah had been upright and active, intrepid, persevering, and gloriously exemplary. To have thought or said of Elijah that he had served

served God much, or above many, had been but faint, partial, inappropriate approbation. He had served God above all his contemporaries. He had been, in his days, incomparably the most illustrious advocate on earth for the truth:—And his were days which put the sincerity and strength of men's religion severely to the test: days of such degeneracy, that there were but seven thousand in Israel who had not *bowed to Baal*; and days of such danger that of those seven thousand none dared to appear for God\*. But neither the cowardice and desertion of the best in Israel, nor the scorn and rage and violence of the worst, could intimidate Elijah;

“ faithful found

“ Among the faithless, faithful only he :

“ Among innumerable false, unmoved,

“ Unshaken, unseduced, unterrified,

“ His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal :

“ Nor number, nor example, with him wrought

“ To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind

“ Tho' fingle †.”

*What carefulness* was there in him to ascertain and discharge

\* 1 Kings xix. 14,—18. † Par. Lost, v. 897.



discharge his duty; *yea, what clearing of himself from fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; yea, what indignation against idolatry; yea, what vehement desire for reformation; yea, what zeal for God; yea, what revenge against the corrupters of his worship, and the seducers of his people?*

As Elijah had signally consecrated himself to God; so, on the other hand, by most memorable tokens, JEHOVAH had avowed himself, and of consequence, could not but chuse to be called, *The God of Elijah.* To Elijah he gave a commission more ample and honourable, than any other prophet, Moses excepted, had ever received. Elijah executed it with a *spirit and power* \* which have been the admiration of all succeeding times: *God also bearing him witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles.* Thus “*honoured in his wondrous deeds†; before his translation, he had many a testimony that he pleased God.*” But his translation itself, as it was the concluding, was the most amazing proof of the divine acceptance. Since the beginning of time he was the second, and he has been the last, who departed for glory by another route than the dark valley of death. Enoch the seventh from Adam was the first: And he too had been, in most perilous times, an illustri-

ous

\* Luke i. 17.

† Eccles. xlviii. 10, &amp; 14.

ous prophet, an undaunted reprover of sin, and a preacher and worker of righteousness; and had dared, alone, to withstand the torrent of corruption in a world deluged by iniquity before it was depopulated by the flood of waters. “He pleased God, and was beloved of him: so that living “among sinners he was translated \*.” In both examples, God gloriously verified the saying that is written, *Them that honour me I will honour.*

As *the man of God*, the man who honoured God and whom God delighted to honour, Elijah’s name was great in Israel; and he was equally dreaded by the bad, and venerated by the good. But Elisha, his friend and disciple, had more *fully known his doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions and afflictions*; and also the grand attestations which he had received of the divine acceptance *unto that same day that he was taken up*: And now, when the varied and interesting and wondrous scene was closed, he was dwelling on the retrospect with a melting heart, and revering the memory while he regretted the loss of *the man of God.*

BUT farther, the appellation used in this address indicates not only Elisha’s recollection of what Elijah had been upon earth, but his firm persuasion that the departed saint was still honourably

C

con-

\* Wisd. iv. 10.



connected with God, and now alive with him in glory. For, when JEHOVAH is in scripture called the God of departed saints, the expression marks, not a past and terminated, but a present and permanent relation; and implies that those whose God he is said to be are not, when they go hence, abandoned by him, but exalted to endless blessedness. This is the doctrine which our Lord stated and demonstrated against the Sadducees. In proof of it he argues, convincingly, on the obvious principle that a relation cannot subsist if one of the correlates fails; *God is not the God of the dead, but of the living* \*. Now, if even Moses shewed at the bush his belief of the happiness of the disembodied souls, and his hope of the future glorious resurrection of the bodies of his great ancestors, when he calleth *The Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob* †: did not Elisha, at the bank of Jordan, when he calls JEHOVAH *the God of Elijah*, as plainly evince his belief that both the soul and body of his illustrious friend were immortalized in glory? Hence, when the sons of the prophets proposed to explore hill and valley in quest of their honourable elder, Elisha discountenanced the extravagant project, and, as long as prudence or modesty would permit, resisted their teasing importunities; avowing thus his conviction

\* Mat. xxii. 32. † Luke xx. 37.

conviction that the heavens had received, and were to retain Elijah. And they did receive him; and we know that they retained him till his appearance on the mount of transfiguration: and they must retain him now till he shall re-appear at the coming of *Jesus Christ our Lord with all his saints*.

WE have now seen that the exclamation before us, indicates the highest respect for translated Elijah, as a man who had been, and who still was, honourably connected with God. How various and opposite must have been the emotions of Elisha while such reflections crowded on his mind! The more he thought on what Elijah had been, the more, doubtless, would he regret his absence; and the more he thought on what he now was, he would the more rebuke the selfishness of his own grief, and rejoice in his friend's great gain.

Similar to the mixed feelings of Elisha at this time, are those of which we are conscious on the remembrance of lost friends, who were indisputably good. In our fond reviews of their character, the mind broods over those excellencies, of which the recollection, while it gratifies our attachments, aggravates our sorrows. But we are insensibly relieved by the exhilarating reflection, that they who lived with God while they lived with



with us, must be with him still, and with him now in the possession of all their hopes and ours. This sublime persuasion characterises the grief of a saint for those *who die in the Lord*. It is a sentiment which at once composes and exalts the soul of the mourner. It translates his heart to heaven: and cheers the gloom of separation with the hope of a blessed re-union in the eternal abodes of the just.

*I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them who are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him.*

*Wherefore comfort one another to-day with these words* \*.—He whom we have lost is gone to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God.

II. LET US consider the exclamation in the text in its reference to Elisha's own peculiar circumstances. It is an earnest ejaculation on his own behalf, that God would be with him as he had been with Elijah.

The ejaculation respected both the present and the future circumstances of Elisha.

It respected his present circumstances. Advanced

\* 1 Thess. iv. 13, 14, & 18.

vanced, to the brink of Jordan, irresistibly instigated to attempt a miraculous passage of its stream, and wrapping together and lifting up the mantle of the translated prophet to smite the waters, he invokes JEHOVAH, *the God of Elijah*, as the apostles in performing miracles, invoked Jesus, the great God our Saviour, the Lord of apostles and prophets. Elisha calls upon God to interpose for him as he had done for his predecessor. He called not in vain. The God of Elijah was present. The waters *saw it, and fled*; *Jordan was driven back*; its channels were discovered; and a safe road on dry ground to its farther bank appeared \*. For, *when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over.*

BUT the ejaculation respected his future as well as his present circumstances. It is a prayer for that great and permanent portion of the prophetic spirit, which he had requested as a last gift from Elijah, which Elijah had conditionally promised him, and which God, by showing him the sign, had pledged himself to bestow. Standing, as most probably he was when he uttered the exclamation in the text, upon or near the spot where the blessing had been asked and granted; ready forth-  
with

\* Verse 8.



with to commence that prophetic career which Elijah had so gloriously terminated, and in which he could not follow him without the same spirit; and having it now no longer in his power to employ that great prophet's intercession with the Author of every good gift; he goes himself to Elijah's God, imploring by direct application what he had formerly sought more circuitously through the influence of Elijah. The heavenly Father granted his petition. *The sons of the prophets* recognised the fact, and said, *The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him*\*: doing homage to him as their chief, reverencing his high station and endowments, and looking up to him as the light of Israel. From that time Elisha *went forth in the spirit and power of Elijah. All Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that he was established to be a prophet of the Lord.* And among the nations all around it was talked that in Israel there was a prophet mighty in word and in deed †. Although in a certain awful sublimity of character, and in the splendour of some of his public actions, Elijah was never equalled by Elisha, the latter can scarcely be held an inferior prophet. He was as useful

to

\* Verse 15. † 2 Kings iii. 12, v. 1, &c. vi. 12. viii. 7.

to the church, and to the state. He performed, say the Jewish writers, twice as many miracles. Four times as long he presided in the prophetic schools, and was revered as the living oracle of heaven. At length, he too finished his course in the ways of righteousness: And when he was departing, the same honourable lamentation with which he followed Elijah, was pronounced over himself. *Joash the king of Israel came down unto him, when he was fallen sick of the sickness whereof he died, and wept over his face, and said, O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof*\*.

THUS, as the answer of prayer for the accomplishment of a divine promise, *the spirit of Elijah rested upon Elisha*; and its fruits were glorious. Happy was it for him that he made such a choice, and happy that he followed it with such fervent supplications!

What an encouragement to the successors of those who have honourably finished their labours in the church, to reflect that *the residue of the spirit is with God*! Conscious when we are, not only of much infirmity, but, it may be, of much inferiority to our predecessors, there is no cause for overwhelming disquietude: for, *there is one Spirit, one Lord, one God and Father of all.*

Of

\* 2 Kings xiii. 14.



Of the enlightening and sanctifying Spirit that is upon Christ, let each of you, brethren, desire a double portion. Would to Heaven it were more the object of emulation among Christians to excel in grace! That strife (a strife which would banish others innumerable) would be glorious in the church, and its event would be happy. Every man's success would diffuse the peace of God through his own heart, and a blessing all around him. That you may obtain the Spirit of Christ, let each, like Elisha, employ the intercession of those who have influence with God; but like Elisha too, let each ask for himself. The excellence of the gift may inspire ardour of application, the promises of God confidence of success. Remember ye not that our Lord Jesus Christ, while he was yet on earth, but about to ascend to heaven, promised to us the Holy Spirit from the Father. *Now I go my way to him that sent me*, said the blessed Saviour; *now I go my way to him that sent me. And it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.* Brethren, Jesus is gone, Jesus is glorified; and your heavenly Father giveth the Holy Spirit to them that ask him\*.

### III. The

\* John xiv. 26. xv. 26. xvi. 5, 7. vii. 39.

III. THE ejaculation in the text is expressive of Elisha's great concern for the people of Israel, now deprived of Elijah's ministry, and committed to his. How deeply he regretted their loss by the departure of Elijah, appeared at the very instant of the translation. Bemoaning them no less than himself, he exclaimed, "*My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.*" In his estimate, the nation had suffered a calamity equalling the ruin of its best appointed armies. Assuredly, the prayer in the text is, in its references, not less extensive than that lamentation: And he who but a little before, when Elijah was taken away, bewailed Israel's loss as feelingly as his own, is now as generously supplicating for Israel, as well as for himself, the presence of Elijah's God.

Elisha well knew that in times of such degeneracy as those in which he lived, when ignorance, infidelity and profanity much prevailed, Israel could but ill spare its intrepid reformer: and that in times of such danger, when Moab was in actual rebellion, and when the insidious and insolent Syrian was menacing invasion, Israel could but ill spare its best defence\*.

D

What

\* 1 Kings xx. 1. 2 Kings i. 1, 6, 8, 12.



What wonder, then, that at the departure of Elijah, the patriotism of Elisha trembled for the state, and his piety for the church? He had ever felt an interest in the prosperity of both. But while Elijah, a man so mighty with God and so intent on his country's good, remained with Israel, that feeling had nothing oppressive in it. Now, however, when the great patriotic saint was gone, it was accompanied with perplexing solicitude for the public safety. And among the sources of Elisha's anxiety, none of the least might be the fear that Elijah's place would be but ill supplied by himself, and that, while the prophetic succession was continued, Israel might suffer much by his occupancy of a station which had been so illustriously filled before.

Thus situated, and feeling thus, what remained for Elisha but to repair, as he did, to the God of his great predecessor, earnestly intreating that the same divine favours which had signalized his ministry might still be continued to Israel? "*Where is the Lord God of Elijah?*" Israel enjoys Elijah "no more: but let them not be deprived of the presence of that God who raised him up, who made him so great a blessing, and who accompanied his exertions with such mighty power,

and

"and effect. *Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock! shine forth in the manifestations of thy glory; and, before Ephraim and Manasseh, stir up thy strength, and come for our salvation by thy wondrous works of providence and of grace; as in the days of Elijah.*"

IN every age, the removal of persons of eminent worth and extensive usefulness, has been deplored as a common calamity. All Israel mourned for Miriam, for Aaron, for Moses, for Samuel; all Judah for Aza, for Hezekiah, for Josiah; king Joash for Elisha; and the devout men for Stephen, the first of Christian Martyrs. When society, by the removal of its best members, loses the benefit of much wisdom and experience, of much active and exemplary goodness, and of much influence with God, neither piety nor humanity can withhold the tear of condolence. If such losses are frequent, and not repaired; if the righteous are taken away from the church, and not replaced, or, if the succession of the great benefactors of the state is perceptibly suspended; the appearance is alarming, and augurs ill for the civil or ecclesiastical community.

The death, therefore, of those who, in a civil or religious view, are *the excellent ones of the earth*, ought



ought to awaken in survivors much serious thoughtfulness. But on such mournful occasions, sympathy with society must produce more substantial fruits than unavailing lamentations. From lamentation for Israel, Elisha now betook himself to prayer, and from prayer to pious and patriotic exertions. *Go ye, and do likewise.* While the disappearance of illustrious virtue rouses your keenest sensibilities for the public loss, let those generous feelings prompt your ardent intercessions for society to Him of whose goodness its departed benefactors were but the instruments: and let them do more; let them animate each of you, in his place, to redouble his own efforts for the benefit of the state, and of the church.

In particular, when the church is from time to time deprived of Pastors, or of private Christians, who have *done worthily* in their generation, and whose names have been famous in Israel, let us, like Elisha, resort in fervent prayer to the Lord God of the holy prophets, who can cause other saviours to come up upon Mount Zion as conspicuous as those who are gone, or can work the same salvation by instruments more obscure. In supplicating at such times, for the remnant that is left, we may, like Elisha, invigorate our desires, and enforce our petitions,

petitions, by references to the past. Remembering *the years of the right hand of the Most High, and his wonders of old*; commemorating the characters, qualifications, and exertions of those benefactors of religion who now *rest from their labours*; and rehearsing in the audience of God what he did in their days, and by their agency;—we may intreat that, as circumstances shall require, similar ministers of good to the church may be provided, similar works of mercy performed, and similar manifestations of the divine glory vouchsafed:

“Where is the Lord God of Elijah? Where is he that  
 “put his Holy Spirit in Moses? Where is he that led  
 “his people with his glorious arm, dividing the waters  
 “before them, to make himself an everlasting name.  
 “Look down from heaven, and behold from the habi-  
 “tation of thy holiness and of thy glory: where is thy  
 “zeal? are thy mercies restrained? where are thy  
 “former kindnesses? Awake, awake, put on strength,  
 “O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days,  
 “in the generations of old. Return, O Lord, how  
 “long? Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and  
 “thy glory unto their children.”

## IV. WE

\* Isa. lxiii. 11, 12, 15. li. 9. Psal. lxxxix. 49. l. 13, 16.



IV. WE come now to the last, and most general view of Elisha's ejaculatory exclamation. It may be considered as expressive and exemplary of that recurrence to God which is highly congenial and consolatory to a devout mind in every trying vicissitude of life.

Contemplated in all its complication of wondrous circumstances, the situation of Elisha, when he uttered the words under review, was wholly unprecedented, and is likely to remain for ever unparalleled. Divested, however, of its extraordinary peculiarities, it forms an important case altogether in unison with daily experience. If his distressful feelings and his religious exercise at this time be considered in their general nature, nothing can be more common among men than the former, or among saints than the latter. The loss of the dearest friends is an evil incident to every man who lives, and this recurrence of the soul to God in its distress is familiar to every saint.

Elisha's affliction, then, considered in this general view, was great indeed; but it is what many are doomed to endure. He had lost the guide and guardian of his youth, the object of his highest esteem and tenderest love, and the immediate source of the best comforts of his life. He felt the calamity in all its bitterness. He knew that his loss

was

was in kind irreparable, and that no creature could supply to him the place of Elijah.

In disastrous situations like this, when all that was loved is lost, and when all that was feared is felt, multitudes are at once insubmissive and despondent. They are discomposed and confounded. They repine at the visitations of Providence, and they feel themselves without resource.

But with Elisha it was not so. Penetrated with the liveliest sorrow, he was yet self-possessed: and he looked up with resignation and hope, with earnest longing and devout supplications to Him who sits on the throne of the heavens regulating all events; and who, *in his holy habitation, is the father of the fatherless, and the judge of the widow, the strangers shield and the orphan's stay*: "*Where is the Lord God of Elijah?*"

The exclamation recognises God's supremacy, and his all-sufficiency.

First; recurring to God in his distress, Elisha adores the divine supremacy: "*Jehovah, the God of Elijah! Elijah's Lord and God!*" In the very words of the address, there is couched an acknowledgement of God's incontestable right to dispose,

as



as he pleased, of Elijah and of every creature; of Elisha's friend and father, and of all Elisha's comforts. "Elijah is gone! but it was Elijah's sovereign Lord and mine who took him away; and I submit. I have lost much; but I have suffered no wrong. *It is Jehovah; let him do what seemeth him good*†."

Thus, brethren, when you feel the bitterest pangs for the loss of what you loved, recognise JEHOVAH as the God of your departed comforts. From him they came. He was still the proprietor of them while they remained. He did not alienate his benefits when he imparted them to you. Your possession could not invalidate his right. Your parents, your spouses, your brethren, your children, your natural relations, your chosen friends, often dearer than they, and all those beloved objects which you call your own; are less yours than his. If he takes any of them away, you may grieve, but you must not complain. Consider; may he not do what he wills with his own. *Be still then, and know that he is God.* Be silent, and adore the awful majesty, the mysterious wisdom, the sovereign authority, the uncontrollable power

† 1 Sam. iii. 19.

power, and the unimpeachable righteousness of the Arbiter of the universe. *Our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he pleased. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord*\*.

Again; in this recurrence to God, afflicted Elisha plainly recognises the divine all-sufficiency. "Where is the Lord God of Elijah? I have lost Elijah, and I shall see him no more. But Elijah's God remains: *O that I knew where I might find him!*"

He contemplates the object of his adoration as JEHOVAH: the first and the last; the greatest and the best; the source and the sum of excellence; the fountain of being, of life, and of blessedness; self-existent, infinite and eternal.

But farther; he contemplates JEHOVAH, in the special character of *The God of Elijah*. No other view of the all-sufficient Parent of good, so exactly accorded with his present feelings, circumstances, or prospects; or was equally calculated to embolden his faith, to elevate his affections, to regulate his desires, and to soothe his sorrows. In JEHOVAH, as the tried object of Elijah's supreme confidence,

E and

\* Psal. cxv. 3. Job i. 21.



and the source of all his excellence, Elisha saw whatever could be needed by himself, as a son who had lost Elijah his father, as a saint who wished to imitate Elijah in holiness, and as a minister who had succeeded Elijah in office. *Where is JEHOVAH the God of Elijah, even himself?*

This is the language of a soul looking through the gloom of afflictive providences to God as the chief good;—decidedly preferring him to the best of his temporal and terrestrial benefits;—more firmly attached to him by every successive proof of their insufficiency and evanescence;—more powerfully impelled toward him by every stroke which they inflict;—following hard after him, with inextinguishable desires, as its most secure refuge, its inexhaustible resource, and its supreme consolation, amidst the ills of life;—and seeking to repose in him as its ultimate rest, and to enjoy him as its all-comprehensive and eternal portion. *“Where is Jehovah even himself? My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God\*. O my God, my soul is cast down within me, therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan.”*

Elisha was heard, and helped. He found in JEHOVAH more than he had lost in Elijah: and obtained

\* Psal. xlii. 6 & 2.

obtained relief for the past, for the present, and for the future, all at once.

Behold, then, brethren, an example worthy to be ever remembered and imitated by the afflicted!—a bereaved soul recalled by the failure of the streams of created comfort, to the everlasting, illimitable, undiminisbable fountain of happiness in the Creator. Are the objects dearest and most delightful to your hearts taken away? Recollect that it was God who infused into them all their sweetness, and gave them all their power to bless. Recollect that they were but the receptacles and the vehicles of his goodness: and seek in him what you have lost in them.

HERE, then, is the wisdom of the saints, the spirit of true devotion, the path of duty and of comfort, amidst all those privations of good, and pressures of evil, which imbitter the present lot of man. It is to recognise and adore the Eternal in the heavens, as the supreme Governor, *who worketh all in all, and doth all things well*; and as the supreme good, *with whom is the fountain of life*, ever open to the believing applicant, and ever adequate to his utmost need.

WE



WE have thus considered the exclamation of Elisha in the several views which appeared most natural:—As an expression of the highest respect for departed Elijah; as an ejaculation for himself in his own peculiar circumstances, and for Israel, after the loss of that great prophet; and, more generally, as an exemplification of that devout recurrence to God which becomes, and indeed characterises, a saint in every distressful conjuncture of affairs.

BRETHREN, the sad event which we deplore this day, and which forms an epoch most interesting to you and to me, naturally turns our reflections (as Elisha's by the departure of Elijah were turned) to the past, to the present, and to the future; to him whom we have lost, to ourselves, and to God.

Our present circumstances as a congregation, and the grand references of the text, do indeed differ extremely in magnitude, but this does not prevent a similarity between them which you may have remarked, nor render Elisha's exercise less proper to be a model for ours.

If

IF Elisha returning from the scene of the translation, standing where he had asked and obtained the parting blessing, and eyeing the stream on which his illustrious friend had performed his last mighty work, could not contain the strong and tender emotions which were struggling within him, but gave them utterance in the abrupt and vehement exclamation of the text, in which he pronounced aloud the honoured name of departed Elijah; for you, and for me, my brethren, —assembled now for the first time since we lost our venerated father, assembled here in the house of the God whom he served, here in the principal scene of his ministrations, here where he was wont to give us his instructions and his blessing, here where the last of his public services was so lately and so honourably performed,—it is impossible not to dwell with melting hearts upon the remembrance of that excellent person whom we shall not again behold till the heavens be no more. In the language of men upon earth, he is now numbered with the dead; but in the language of the better world, he is now at length arrived at the land of the living. He rests from the labours of forty and two years among you, my beloved brethren.



brethren. To this congregation, while it has a being, his memory must be dear. He found it a tender plant, and he watched over it and watered it, till it grew up and flourished.

He has given us now his last admonition by his death: And it had a sudden, a loud, and an awful voice. Each of us felt that he had lost a father, and a friend. Let us profit by him still, my brethren. Let not his usefulness among us end with his ministry.

THE scripture exhorts us to take for our examples the saints of God who have run the Christian race before us: an exhortation which presupposes, and which therefore requires, a careful recollection, and a frequent re-impression upon our minds, of whatever was laudable in their character or conduct.

A character without defects, and combining every excellence, is not to be found. *Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are* \*. And the Apostle Paul, while he proposes himself as a pattern to saints in every age, professes not to have attained the perfection at which he aspired, and recommends not an indiscriminate imitation. The  
law

\* James v. 17

law and example of Christ are our only rule. The examples of the saints are greatly helpful, however, to excite and encourage our attempts to regulate our conversation by that supreme standard: for they demonstrate the practicability of very high degrees of conformity to it, they show the loveliness of the beauties of holiness even in men who had infirmities like our own, and they kindle in us an holy ardour to emulate those who became what they were by that very grace which is proffered to ourselves. The recollection of the examples of those saints whom we knew and honoured while they lived, must have an influence peculiarly powerful to produce imitation. For in this case, all those tender emotions which surround the idea of objects so beloved, operate to attach our hearts to those excellencies which rendered them amiable and respectable to us, and to assimilate us insensibly to characters which we follow with our esteem, our regrets, and our affectionate remembrance.

To stimulate and assist recollection of departed excellence, a public commemoration of it is sometimes proper. It is sanctioned by the authority of  
the



the very highest example. When John the Baptist had finished his ministry, our Saviour, his contemporary and survivor, publicly pronounced his eulogy: "*He was a burning and a shining light.*"

SUFFER me, then, my brethren, to put you in remembrance of him who so long *spoke unto you the word of God*, and to call upon you to be followers of him, *even as he also was of Christ*. For, having now for almost eleven years *served with him in the gospel as a son with the father*, I have fully known his doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, and afflictions. Yet I speak not for your information; for ye have known him yourselves, and also bear him record. His praise is in the churches: and he was extensively known and esteemed in the world. I am not now going to present an overcharged picture of what he was, or to try to agitate your hearts with a conflict of sorrows for your own loss, to do either of which were as fruitless as it is unnecessary; but to exhibit, in the words of truth and soberness, a description which you will recognize to be just, and a pattern which it were wise in us all to copy.

OF

OF his natural gifts, or of his acquirements of learning and knowledge, which were confessedly very superior, I shall not speak particularly. Suffice it to say that, whatever they were, he consecrated them all to God and to righteousness: not only because he anticipated the account which he had to render at the supreme tribunal for the use of his talents, but because he found the most substantial enjoyment in the right application of them.

In like manner, brethren, *give yourselves to the Lord*, and devote to his service whatever you derive from his bounty.

REMEMBER the faith of him who was the helper of yours. Firmly was he convinced of the truth of the gospel which he preached, and deeply was he impressed with the importance of its revelations. He conversed much with things heavenly and eternal. Of him it was characteristic, in a degree which I recollect with reverence, that he bowed with most profound submission to every expression of God's legislative will in the scriptures; and that the ascertainment of his duty instantly and immutably determined his purpose and his practice. He preserved, by faith, an hap-  
F  
PY



py equanimity amidst the fluctuations and storms of external events. When of late years the public aspect of things at home and abroad was most perplexing and threatening, he composed his mind by devout recollections of the divine superintendence; and often used this manner of speaking, "God knows best how to govern his own world, and will order all things well."

Like him, brethren, live with God, impressed with his presence, persuaded of his truths, dependent on his promises, observant of his precepts, and rejoicing in his supreme dominion.

If charity be the prime of Christian graces, it was the most prominent feature in the character of him whose loss we deplore. His charity was truly Christian. He was eminently a philanthropist. The man cannot be named who is more candid in judgement, or less suspicious in temper; less apt to blame, or more prone to excuse, and to forgive. There was one excellence in which I think I may be confident he never was, and could not be, surpassed. Among an assemblage of virtues, it formed, perhaps, his most discriminative characteristic. It was his most strict observance of that apostolical precept, *Speak evil of no man* \*.

He

\* Titus iii. 2.

He was never known to transgress it. And the observance of it, how difficult soever experience proves it to be, must have been easy to one whose heart, as much as any man's, was a stranger to envy, and ill-will, and the whole train of malignant passions. No absent person was ever the object of his censure. He discountenanced the backbiting tongue. He was the guardian of every man's character. As far as truth would permit, or charity could believe and hope, he was every man's apologist. He was accustomed to interpret the conduct of those around him upon the most generous principles. His differences in matters of conscience with the wise and good, did not, on the one hand, prejudice him against their persons, or their integrity, or blind him to their excellencies; nor, on the other, shake his steadfastness to his own clear convictions. They only proved occasions, and afforded scope, for the exercise of his abundant charity. In reference to many such cases of difference, he often remembered and often repeated the maxims of Paul, *Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth.* Adhering with inflexible exactitude in his own practice to the dictates of a conscience which was ever consulting the oracles of truth,

he



he respected the rights of conscience in other men. Refusing to subject his own to any but God, he never made it a rule for that of his neighbour. Hence, he could allow in others several things from which he abstained himself. He was too enlightened, indeed, to be superstitiously scrupulous. But still upon himself his severest restrictions were imposed, and still upon himself his severest censures fell; while his candour and indulgence were for other men: herein displaying, if I do not greatly err, the true liberality of a conscientious Christian. But unsuspecting and indulgent as he was, he had a keen discernment of right and wrong: and such was the independence of his mind, his indignation at sin, his warm benevolence to men, and his happy art of conciliating those whom he wished to amend, that he greatly excelled in successfully administering that kind of private exhortation which prophets and apostles have ranked among the best expressions of brotherly love. As he would not suffer slander upon his brother, so he would *not suffer sin upon him* \*. The same enlightened generosity which repelled the former, reproved the latter. His manner showed that his admonitions were the effusion of the most amiable principle in the human heart,

and

\* Lev. xix. 17.

and those to whom they were administered ever found them *an excellent oil which did not break the head* \*. And he was as ready to direct by his friendly advice those who sought his counsel respecting their spiritual or temporal concerns: nor was he less disposed to pour the balm of consolation into the sorrowing heart. Be witness for him, all the brethren, if he was not ever active to assist the fatherless, the friendless and the poor, by exerting for them his influence, which his respectability rendered great, or imparting to them of his substance, which was more than what always falls to the lot of those who minister in sacred things.

Let the same amiable and benign principle of Christian charity which was in him, be also in you. Manifest its reign in your souls by your candour of judgement; by your benevolence of heart, and ardour of affection; by your inoffensiveness in purpose, speech and deed; by your affability and gentleness of manners; by your generous forbearance and forgiveness; and by your strenuous endeavours to promote the happiness of your neighbour as far as you can command the means, or can influence the benevolence of other men, or can avail by your prayers with God. *Let love be without*

\* Psal. cxli. 5.



*without dissimulation. Let the charity of every one of you all toward each other abound. As we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*

WITH charity to men, zeal for God was combined in the character of our departed father. His was an enlightened zeal. It was, therefore, temperate; but steady and strong. Not originating in selfish principles or dark prejudices, it did not operate by malignant or mischievous passions. Fully persuaded in his own mind that the religious association of which he was a member, approaches, upon the whole, more nearly than other Christian societies around us, the pattern of the church divinely delineated in the New Testament, he persevered, *stedfast unto the end*, in our good profession:—a profession of which the spirit and object may have been misunderstood, but which is neither more nor less than a practical adherence to the explanatory standards of the Church of Scotland, as a proper ground-work for progressive reformation. But I must remind you, brethren, that his attachment to our profession respected not any of our tenets and forms as party distinctions, but as divine truths and institutions: for, as he was not one of those whose charity to men is indifference to the doctrines

doctrines and ordinances of God, neither was he one of those whose zeal for God is nothing but bigotry to their own opinions. He called good and evil, right and wrong, by their proper names, whether he observed them among ourselves or others. And I have heard him say that he thought it more his duty, and more for our profit, to reprobate, in his public ministrations, what was amiss among ourselves, than to dwell often and much and long upon the faults of other churches. If he sometimes condemned what he deemed reprehensible in them (and we know that he could expose error for our confirmation in the truth), the same principle of zeal always prompted him to applaud every thing in them which he judged laudable. His spirit was too catholic not to esteem other denominations of Christians, and the Christians who compose them, exactly in proportion as candour could believe them desirous to hold *the faith which was once delivered the saints, and to observe whatever Christ hath commanded*. He rejoiced to co-operate for the interests of religion with Christians of every name, as far as this involved, on his part, no dereliction of principle, and no approbation of what his conscience condemned. Hence, the latest public institution among us for religious purposes, the Sabbath schools as they are conducted



conducted in this place, had his heartiest support. And this happy union of such multitudes of Christians of various denominations, this grand confederacy of churches in distant lands, this "general movement" in the protestant world for evangelizing the heathen nations, much refreshed the evening of his life. The wondrous appearance seemed to him, while he contemplated *this day of darkness and gloominess, of clouds and of thick darkness*, like a bright bow in our sky, betokening peace.

Let me earnestly recommend to you, brethren, a careful remembrance and imitation of his zeal, which seemed to be much formed on the scriptural model. For, it was equally distant from two extremes into the one or the other of which multitudes of Christians are prone to deviate. It was very remote, on the one hand, from that fiery eagerness in matters appertaining to religion, which is, for the most part, nothing but passion fighting for prejudice, and which, even when its object is good is still *the wrath of man which worketh not the righteousness of God*: a zeal than which nothing can be more hurtful to the interests of Christianity, or abhorrent to its spirit: a zeal which is the offspring of perverse ignorance, the murderer of genuine charity, and the parent of contention, confusion,

confusion, and many an evil work. On the other hand, his zeal was not less remote from that indifference of mind and lukewarmness of heart to the truths and institutions of Christ which degrades into insignificance and treats with neglect many things which he has sanctioned with the whole weight of his authority. In the system of Christianity all things are not indeed of equal importance: yet no divine dictate respecting matters of faith or practice can be indifferent either in its obligation, or in its consequences; but involves our duty, and our best interests. To dignify some evangelical truths and institutions with the title of Essentials, which we must preserve inviolate, and to herd the rest together as Circumstantials, which we may overlook at pleasure, or for the attainment of any supposed advantages, is to create a distinction which is arbitrary, undefinable, and dangerous. It is, in effect, to controul the Legislator of the church, and to say to his authority, *Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther*. His mandate, and not our estimate of the real or comparative importance of what he enjoins, is the rule and reason of our duty. By him the doctrines, the positive institutions, and the morality of Christianity are combined into one regular, consistent and inviolable whole, and committed to our fidelity.



lity. Whatever he has confided to us, we must retain and defend. Whatever he has ordained, we must observe. What he has conjoined, we must not put asunder. Every individual must endeavour to ascertain for himself, what the Lord his God requires of him: and, being *fully persuaded in his own mind*, he must continue *walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless*. Reverencing the weightier matters of the law, he must not lightly esteem any of its contents. For *whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend (wilfully and habitually) in one point, is guilty of all. He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much. Whosoever therefore shall (knowingly and obstinately) break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven\**. While each of us, therefore, still open to conviction endeavours to make progress in *understanding what the will of the Lord is*, let him, as far as his mind is presently illuminated, and his faith assured, be zealous of the doctrine of God's holy word, zealous of Christ's positive enactments, *zealous of good works*: meekly yet immoveably, calmly yet warmly, boldly

\* Mat. xxiii. 23. James ii. 10. Luke xvi. 10. Mat. v. 19.

ly yet inoffensively attached to whatever is true, and right, and good.

I do not need to tell you, brethren, that in his ministerial labours our departed father was very abundant. Look abroad among all the churches, you will not find a man whose constant official services are as numerous and arduous as his were in his more vigorous days. An enumeration of particulars would evince the truth of an assertion which may indeed appear bold to those who knew him not, but which we can make with confidence. Nor can this be any reproach to those who minister in sacred things: for as few are endowed with his powers and promptitude of mind, fewer still possess bodily strength equal to exertions like his. Even his own robust constitution sunk under them. They overpowered it with a growing load of infirmities. If such extraordinary exertions may seem more than was requisite, they manifest, however, an heart supremely intent on duty. In his public discourses he handled a great variety of subjects: and his choice of them was often determined by important occurrences in the congregation, in the church at large, or in the world. In very few words he could exhibit the spirit and force of a considerable portion of scripture:



scripture: and in framing his practical deductions, which were always natural, and often new, he was much assisted by his extensive knowledge of men and things. He greatly excelled in "inculcating moral duties on gospel principles,"—in showing the dependence of the morality of our religion on its mysteries, and the influence of its doctrines on practice. Often in his public appearances, he might be compared to a man who in searching for hidden treasure, had struck upon an inexhaustible vein, and had dug deep, and was throwing out masses of rich ore, of which the superficial polish was less regarded than the weight and the worth. His was an active ministry, spent in unremitted exertions among his people. He could never be prevailed on, though he had been often importuned, to publish discourses to the world. But he was not, on that account, the less useful in his day, or the less eminent. And he is not to be less honoured now by us than many of those whose excellent works survive them. Thus, to state a comparison among inspired ministers whose memory is blessed in the church, Isaiah's glorious oratory, so conspicuous in the Book of God, does not exalt him to a higher rank among prophets than the illustrious Tishbite, of whose writings

writings nothing has been preserved but one short epistle\*.

And, now, brethren, having had so great an example among us of activity usefully exerted in its proper sphere, we desire that every one of you do shew the same attention to the duties of his calling, whatever it may be. *Be ye diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.* Memorable is that injunction of the scripture, *In his calling let every man abide with God.* For it is only by abiding and moving in his proper sphere, and passing on with punctuality and ardour through the whole circuit of its duties, that any man glorifies God by submission to his providence and his precepts, becomes a blessing to society in all his private or public connexions with it, and exemplifies and extends the salutary influence of our holy religion.

He of whose useful and honourable activity we have been witnesses, was so very disinterested as to have been through life above all suspicion of a contrary disposition. In taking his last farewell of his congregation, he might have said, and every man's heart would have attested the truth, "*I sought not yours but you.*" And as he coveted not

\* 2 Chron. xxi, 12,—15.



not gain, neither did he labour for applause. His mind was too good, and it was too great, to have this for its object. He always had your approbation in a high degree. He was well entitled to it; and he valued it: but he preferred the approbation of conscience and of God. And so denied was he to his labours, that he never thought he could do enough for Christ, and for you. Though he knew that his early exertions had embittered his declining age, he did not regret them. And though he could not be ignorant that they exceeded those of other men, he never spoke of them with self-complacency: and indeed, which was the best proof his humility, seldom mentioned them at all.

*So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do\*.*

RECOLLECT how he demeaned himself in the ordinary affairs of life. He was not a man of reclusive habits. He mingled with society. He knew the world: and his intercourse with men exhibited an example of the wisdom of the serpent in union with the harmlessness of the dove. His heart

\* Luke xvii. 10.

heart was so sincere and warm, his aspect was so benign, and his manner so open and courteous, that those with whom he conversed could not but feel themselves in the presence of a friend, and follow him with their attachments. And there was about him such an air of dignity, as ever secured to him due respect, and silenced before him the impertinence of Vice. In a degree not common, he possessed the happy talent of *becoming all things to all men*; and of adapting himself with promptitude and propriety to every temper, and to every combination of circumstances: still, however, appearing like himself, and preserving the consistency, the dignity, and sanctity of his character. Such was his command of mind that the utmost cheerfulness of social intercourse in which he ever indulged did not for a moment disqualify him for the most serious exercises; and these, again, seldom indisposed him for any innocent enjoyment. His conversation, undebased with the levity of folly, or the gloom of superstition, with the contractedness of bigotry, or the extravagance of enthusiasm, was calculated to render religion amiable and respectable.

In like manner, brethren, *denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, live soberly, righteously and godly,*  
in



*in this present world; adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.*

He had all along no small measure of those troubles which are common to men. Of late, his afflictions came fast and heavy upon him. His family was *broken with breach upon breach*. His bodily infirmities and pains increased greatly in number and degree. But he was never heard to murmur against his God. In the last epistle which he ever wrote, and which was expressive of the tender interest which he took in you and in me, he says concerning that distress which he felt growing upon him, and which in a few hours he was to feel no more, "What the issue will be God knows, and to his wise determination I wish to submit." Amidst all his sufferings he was chearful to the end, and active in his public duty: a proof that he experienced at once the consolations of religion, and its power. He wished to be found occupying his proper station, and employed in his proper work, at his Lord's coming. If, in his latter years there was any abatement of that force and splendour which distinguished his earlier ministrations, the light of the evening was, notwithstanding, as steady and useful as that of the noon-day. In preaching last Sabbath but one,

on

on those memorable words in the Gospel according to John, the seventh chapter, and the thirty-seventh verse, *In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink*;—there was in that discourse which terminated his ministerial labours such an evangelical radiance, fervour and power, as revived in many of the older members of the congregation the impressions of his more ancient manner. Thus he held on in the paths of righteousness, diffusing around him the benefits of his ministry to the close of his life. He was not like the unsubstantial meteor, which, while it is in its progress, is extinguished in mid-sky, and then passes on in darkness, till it drops upon the earth an unsightly dreg; but like the sun in the firmament, who shines till he sinks beneath the horizon.

DURING the last years of his life, he had often spoken of his dissolution as not remote: and for several weeks before it happened, he seemed to have strong and fixed presentiments of its speedy approach. These he had expressed on various occasions: and particularly, after he had delivered his last discourse; and on the last day which he spent in this place; and still more remarkably on the last evening of his life. It was

H



the last of the week. He passed it with all his usual cheerfulness, and with more than usual expressions of tenderness for his friends who were then about him. In the duties of private devotion as well as in conversation, there appeared uncommon indications that his mind was greatly impressed with the thoughts of death and eternity. The last exercise in which he was known to be engaged was preparation for preaching on the morrow. For it had been his invariable custom to embrace an opportunity, wherever the Lord's day found him, of publicly showing to men the way of salvation. But, brethren, he had another appointment for last Lord's Day. Retiring to rest, that nature might be refreshed for the offices of religion, he arose no more. He left this world obviously without struggle; most probably without sensation of suffering; and, perhaps, without awakening out of his sleep till his soul had sprung for ever from corruption into glory. Happy, happy exchange! to quit that diseased, aching body, and this tempestuous world, for the perfect joys and untroubled splendours of IMMANUEL'S land! Happier was it to be with Christ that day, and to mingle with the saints and angels around his throne, than to be preaching him to sinners, or praising him here below in the congregations.

OUR

OUR departed father was a man so eminent for his entire acquiescence in the divine appointments that there was nothing for which he manifested any intemperance of desire. He had greatly attained what he was wont to recommend to others "the having no will but God's." There were, however, a few things for which he was accustomed to express an earnest though submissive wish. Often he wished that, if it were the will of God, he might not survive his usefulness. And God granted him the desire of his heart. Often he wished that, if it were the will of God, he might not have a lingering death, but a speedy translation. And God granted him the desire of his heart. Often he wished to see his beloved congregation in peace and prosperity. And God granted him the desire of his heart. His philanthropy sighed for the restoration of tranquillity to the afflicted nations; his patriotism for the union and safety of his country; and his piety for the universal extension of the kingdom of Christ. And may God grant those desires of his heart.

To be speaking thus of that long known and much venerated person as one whom we are to see no more, is to us, my brethren, a theme new and afflictive indeed. Yet there is every thing consolatory



latory which the case can admit. He had spent his days in honourable and useful activity, and it was fit that he should enter into his rest. He had lived long enough for himself, and was ready for his departure. We have seen his end; and it was peace. And we believe that he has now in possession all that we have in promise, and in prospect.

As for me, brethren, it is not expedient, doubtless, for me to make myself the subject of discourse here before you. You have witnessed for many years a collegiate connection, than which, perhaps, there was never one more comfortable. Indeed, there could not be. But I will not now speak of that happy union, or of this heart-rending separation. Standing, however, for the first time in this new and interesting situation, and having spoken to you concerning the venerated dead; let me only intreat for myself, my brethren; that I may still experience your usual great indulgence:—and especially let me intreat that you will present your prayers to God on my behalf as well as your own, that when such a great deduction is made from the knowledge, wisdom and experience of the ministry among you, and when such an additional charge devolves on me, I may receive a more abundant supply of the spirit of

of his grace; that the God who was him whom we have lost may be with us still; and that his work may prosper in this his sanctuary, as in the days of his departed servant. If he who was with Elisha as he had been with Elijah, and with Joshua as he had been with Moses, if he who gave the increase to Apollos who entered into the labours of another, as well as to Paul the founder of churches, shall command the blessing upon us, our last things may be greater and better than the first. He who parted the waters of Jordan at the stroke of Elijah's mantle, he who divided the Red-Sea at the stretching out of the rod of Moses, can still effect the mightiest works by the meanest instruments. For *not by might or power* of man, but by the Spirit of the Lord, the church is built. Elijah is not, Elisha is not; where is Paul who planted, and where is Apollos who watered? yet the church survives and flourishes; the same gracious designs are promoted in it, and the same blessings of salvation dispensed; because its God remains the same, in might and in mercy, throughout all generations.

Our present loss, brethren, gives to you and to me a loud call, and a great occasion to resort to that high throne from which comes our help. The departure



departure of Elijah, as we have seen, roused Elisha to enquire after *the Lord God of the holy Prophets*. And long afterwards, when the church lost the second Elias, that *burning and shining light*, that faithful reprove of kings, *his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus*\*. It was wisely done. It was well for them that the death of that eminent minister of the church brought them to Jesus, its living head. Jesus still lives, brethren; and is still accessible to us. In the midst of Zion, he is the Counsellor and the King and the Priest for ever. On him cometh the care of all the churches. *He standeth and feedeth in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God*. Let us seek unto him and unto him let us commit our cause.

LET me remind you that your gratitude to the Head of the church for his gifts must not end with the possession of them. Bless him for having given what he has taken away; and join thanksgiving with your grief. We have lost much, and what we had long enjoyed: and we have cause to mourn. But what shall we render unto the Lord for having lent us so rich a treasure for such a length of years?

YOUR

\* Matth. xiv. 12.

YOUR honoured and faithful Pastor has now given an account of his ministry to him from whom he received it. Remember, brethren, that you must give an account of that ministry too. His work is terminated; your opportunities are not. You see that the prophets do not live for ever; bethink yourselves that they among whom they have laboured are fast hastening after them to the *land of deep forgetfulness*. Think, oh think! brethren, of how little avail it were now to him who has left us to have gained whatever the world can give of profit or of honour, had he not been faithful to God, and mindful of his own salvation! to have preached the gospel, had he not believed it! And what will it avail you to hear it, if you reject it; to understand its doctrines, if you do not imbibe its spirit; to exhibit a form of godliness, if you do not experience its power; and to make a good profession, if you do not adorn it with an holy life? *Know, therefore, in this your day, the things which belong to your peace*. Seize the passing opportunities. While you live, live to God. While time rolls on in resistless and uninterrupted career, prepare for that awful and endless futurity towards which it impels you.

IN



IN the midst of this fluctuating, transitory, and afflictive scene of things which surrounds us, while generation after generation passes away, while pastors and their flocks are swept from the earth in quick succession, while year after year bereaves us of some of our dearest comforts, while we ourselves are fleeting and perishable as the frail and fugitive objects of which we deplore the loss,—how reviving is it, when the anxious mind and heart search the universe for something whereon to rest, to reflect that what is most glorious there is the most remote from change, that the most excellent of beings is absolutely immutable, and that the best of his benefits are the most enduring! *Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath; the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment: but my salvation, saith God, shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished; my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed.*

CHUSE, then, that better part which shall not be taken away. *Acquaint yourselves now with God. Make him your trust. Make him your hiding-place. Make him your hope, and your chief joy.*  
Prefer

Prefer him before your highest temporal comforts. Habituate yourselves to consider them as the emanations of his goodness. Thus shall you enjoy him in them while they remain; you shall be prepared to resign them at his call; and, when they are gone, you shall find your resources undiminished, and your griefs assuaged by strong consolations. Possessing him you shall *have all and abound*. You may lose your best connections upon earth, but you shall not be friendless; your wealth, but you shall not be poor; your enjoyments, but you shall not be miserable. And when at last, you yourselves shall be summoned hence; when, having finished your wanderings in the wilderness, you shall descend into *the swellings of Jordan*, you shall pass on in safety under the conduct of your God, and shall lift up your feet with joy upon the shores of the heavenly Canaan. *Thy people shall pass over, O Lord; the people shall pass over whom thou hast purchased. Thou shalt bring them in and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance; in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in; in the sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established.* There, ye saints of God, shall ye find better comforts than those which ye enjoyed, and which ye lost or left in this land of your pilgrimage. In the presence, and  
I around



around the throne of *The Everlasting Father*, shall ye behold all the excellent persons who ever adorned the church on earth, the patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles, the saints and martyrs of Jesus; those departed brethren with whom ye have taken sweet counsel, and those faithful ministers who have *finished the work which was given them to do*. There Elisha has found his Elijah. There Abraham is associated with all his sons. There dwells the Redeemer in the midst of all his redeemed, arriving in their appointed times to complete the congregation of the heavens. There the general assembly of just men and angels, with Jesus Christ enthroned and president among them in his peerless majesty, is eternally convened. There no voice shall ever be heard like that, "*Where is the Lord God of Elijah?*"—for he shall appear to their joy. *The Lord God shall be their everlasting light, and their God their glory. And the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters;—and the days of their mourning shall be ended.*

SERMON

## SERMON II.



MINUTE of the COMMITTEE for  
directing SABBATH SCHOOLS.

Paisley, Laigh Church Session-house, 9th July 1798.

THE Committee unanimously passed a Vote of Thanks to the Rev. Mr. FERRIER for the very excellent and suitable Discourse preached on Sabbath evening the 1st instant, for the benefit of the Sabbath School Society.—And as the Committee understand that Mr. FERRIER is about to publish a Sermon preached on occasion of Mr. Alice's death, they agreed to request him to publish also the above Discourse, with an Appendix giving some account of the progress and state of the Society.

W. M'GAVIN, Sec.

SERMON II.

PSAL. LXXXVIII. 5.

FOR HE ESTABLISHED A TESTIMONY IN JACOB, AND  
APPOINTED A LAW IN ISRAEL, WHICH HE COM-  
MANDED OUR FATHERS THAT THEY SHOULD  
MAKE THEM KNOWN TO THEIR CHILDREN.

THIS Psalm, as we learn from its title, was written by Asaph; a Levite, a chief musician in the days of David, and a man endued with the spirit of inspiration. He begins his song with a grateful commemoration of the high advantages which he and his contemporaries derived from the religious instruction which had been imparted to them by their predecessors:—Give ear, O my people: I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old (ancient mysteries which have employed the research and the traditionary care of all past ages): sayings which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. He then excites his brethren of Israel to imitate, along with him,



him, the zeal of their pious ancestors to transmit the knowledge of divine things to succeeding generations, and distant times:—What our fathers have told us, *we will not hide from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works.* The text describes the principal subject proposed for transmission, and recognises the obligation to transmit it:—*God established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to make known to their children.* What is the benefit to be transmitted from race to race? *A testimony divinely established in Jacob, and a law divinely appointed in Israel.* What creates the obligation to the transmission of it? The peremptory requisition of Israel's Supreme Lawgiver and Benefactor. He who *established the testimony in Jacob, and appointed the law in Israel, commanded our fathers to make them known to their children.*

THE text thus divides itself into two parts. The first expresses Israel's privilege: the second, Israel's correspondent duty.

I. OBSERVE Israel's privilege. Among them God had *established a testimony, and appointed a law.*

The

The same subject is here called *A Testimony*, and *A Law*:—*A Testimony*, because it was an authentic notification of God's will: and—*A Law*, because it contained an authoritative prescription of man's duty.

He *established in Jacob A Testimony.* The whole of Revelation is God's *Testimony*, in which facts, doctrines, precepts, promises, and threatenings are by his infallible veracity propounded to the faith of men. Here, the Psalmist contemplates this *Testimony* as it was *established in Jacob*, or incorporated into God's Covenant of Peculiarity with his ancient people. This Covenant was first made with Abraham; it was renewed with Isaac; afterwards, it was confirmed to Jacob; and finally, with the most awful and glorious formalities of Heaven, it was ratified with the twelve tribes of Israel standing in holy convocation before God at the foot of Sinai. It secured to them many important secular advantages; but it likewise exhibited and conveyed to them those better things which appertain to salvation.

God also *appointed in Israel—A Law.* They possessed three systems of Laws, all immediately dictated by God. They had a perfect summary of the Moral Law, the eternal rule of righteousness. They had the Ceremonial Law: a religious system



system of symbolical objects and observances; *a shadow of good things to come* in the evangelical and celestial states of the church; one grand hieroglyphic of the sacred and sublime, the ancient and immutable mysteries of the only true religion. And they had the Judicial Law, a civil code peculiar to themselves, and admirably adapted to their circumstances, as a political body under the singular form of a theocratic government.

Such was the nature and the comprehension of Israel's privilege:—a privilege which made Israel great indeed, a people near to God, and high in honour above all other nations. *What advantage hath the Jew? says Paul, or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. To them pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises. For God established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel\*.*

II. OBSERVE in the text, Israel's duty. Every privilege bestowed upon men by the Supreme Governour, involves an obligation to correspondent duty. That which was imposed on Israel as a people enjoying God's *testimony and law* was exactly analogous to their grand hereditary prerogative.

\* Deut. iv. 7, 8. Rom. iii. 1, 2. ix. 4.

tive. Of the men of each successive generation it was required that, while they availed themselves to the utmost of the privileges which they had in possession, they should transmit them to their descendants as they had received them from their progenitors. *He commanded our fathers that they should make them known to their children:*—a duty of which the prescription was most worthy of the goodness and wisdom of that God whose mercy is upon his people from generation to generation:—a duty congenial to the most generous feelings and principles of the human heart, which prompt men to provide for the good of posterity:—a duty which is itself a most felicitating privilege; for, what greater privilege can a good man desire than the power of leaving for an inheritance to his children's children the oracles and the ordinances of God?

*He commanded our fathers to make them known to their children.* Never was any command of Heaven more clearly promulgated, more peremptorily sanctioned, more earnestly and frequently inculcated, or more variously enforced. Various also were the methods which were ordained and employed for facilitating its execution, and ensuring its effect.

K

As



As the two tables of stone on which the ten commandments were inscribed by the finger of God, had, by divine appointment, the high and peculiar honour to be placed for perpetual preservation under the mercy-seat, and within the ark of the covenant \*; the original copy of the whole law, the genuine manuscript of Moses, was, in obedience to the same authority, deposited on the outside of the ark for occasional and solemn consultation †. From that venerable original, which was to be seen from age to age, copies were ordered to be transcribed: and they were multiplied, and dispersed throughout Israel, so that every man might *search the scriptures* for himself, and learn what the Lord his God required of him †.

BUT still more effectually to preserve and extend the knowledge of sacred things, all the sons of a whole tribe of Israel were formed into a distinct order, and consecrated by God to the celebration of the ordinances of worship, to the study of the law, and the instruction of the people.  
Hence,

\* Exod. xxv. 21. xl. 20. Deut. x. 2. 1 Kings viii. 9.

† Deut. xxxi. 24—26. † Deut. xix. 18. Josh. i. 8. Deut. vi. 9. Pr. i. 2. Luke x. 26. Matth. xii. 3. xix. 4. Psal. xxi. 16, 42. xxii. 31. John v. 39.

Hence, of the children of Levi Moses said in his valedictory address to that great assembly which he was not to introduce into Canaan, *They shall teach Jacob thy judgements, and Israel thy law: they shall put incense before thee, and whole-burnt-sacrifice upon thine altar* \*. Individually and collectively, in public and in private, they were to inculcate the doctrines and duties of religion. *The priests lips should keep knowledge, says Malachi, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts* †.

BUT while the care of instruction was principally committed, it was not confined, to the sacred order. From among all the tribes indiscriminately, men of wisdom and experience, elders and scribes, sometimes princes, and often inspired teachers, appeared as the luminaries of Israel. Knowledge was propagated, not merely by solitary individuals, however respectable and assiduous, but by the more diffusive and perpetuated labours of organized and permanent establishments.

Throughout the land there were Synagogues, or houses for worship and sacred instruction, in which the book of the law was religiously kept, and, from week to week, read and expounded. Hence, the apostle

\* Deut. xxxiii. 10. † Mal. ii. 7.



file James observed in his discourse at the synod of Jerusalem; *Moses hath from old time in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath-day* \*. And in all the countries of their dispersion, the Jews anciently had, as they still have, such places of public concourse for the reading of the law and the prophets †.

Again; in various parts of Canaan were the Schools of the Prophets; seminaries which seem to have subsisted from the days of Samuel to those of Gamaliel, and in which the youth of Israel imbibed, and became qualified to impart, the knowledge of sacred things. It was at the feet of the wise Gamaliel, that Saul of Tarsus was taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and acquired that deep insight into the *dark sayings of old*, which, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, he afterwards so successfully employed in confounding the prejudices of the Jews, in unfolding the mystery of Christ, and in promoting the cause of Christianity.

Farther; at Jerusalem sat the Sanhedrim, the great council of the nation, composed of seventy-three of the most honourable elders; the court of last resort, definitively interpreting the law, and authori-

\* Psal. lxxiv. 8. Acts xv. 21. † Acts xiii. 14, 15, 27.

authoritatively enforcing the execution of it. These were they concerning whom Jesus spake to the multitude, and to his disciples, saying, *The scribes and pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do* \*.

There was another institution for disseminating the knowledge of divine things, which the whole body of public instructors and sacred rulers were charged to carry into effect, and which is highly worthy of remark. It was an institution of a singular kind. Every seventh year, at one of the three great annual festivals, the whole law was to be deliberately and distinctly read, by the priests and elders, in the audience of all the assembled multitudes of Israel. *Moses wrote the law, and delivered it unto the priests the sons of Levi, and unto all the elders of Israel, and commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, when all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall chuse, thou shalt read this law before all Israel. Gather the people together; men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may*

\* Matth. xxiii. 1—3.



may learn: and that their children which have not known any thing may hear, and learn to fear the Lord your God \*. What could be more solemn and impressive than this septennial promulgation of the law? what could have been more wisely ordained? It was a public and perpetual memorial, a demonstrative proof from age to age, that no imposture had been practised in the original establishment of the law in Israel: it secured it against corruption: and, while it served to re-impress it upon the minds and hearts of the aged, it was admirably calculated to render it an object of attention, reverence and inquiry to the young.

BUT the priests, the Levites, the elders, and other men of eminent wisdom and learning, were not the only instructors in Israel. Remember, said Moses in his last song, *remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee* †. Not only the elders of every tribe, but the fathers of every family in Israel, must be apt to teach:—*Ask thy father, and he will tell thee.* To every father Moses addressed this solemn charge:—*These words which I command thee this day, shall*  
be

\* Deut. xxxi. 9—13.

Deut. xxxii. 7.

be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children. The fathers were to excite, assist and satisfy the inquiries of their children respecting the meaning of every religious doctrine and rite. And to aid the parents in communicating instruction, the law itself supplied them with formal answers and explanations upon the most important points which could be supposed to attract the attention, and awaken the curiosity of those whose reason was beginning to investigate and to compare. What, for instance, could be more striking to the rising youth of Israel than the annual recurrence of the solemnities of the passover, when the lamb for the family repast was eaten, in the place chosen by God, with a scrupulous preparation and an awful solemnity observed at no other time? What could be more natural than their inquiries into the origin and design of that institution? The inquiries were anticipated, and the answer provided. *And in shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice (commemorative) of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses* \*. To  
the

\* Exod. xii. 26, 27.



the young inquisitive Israelite few things were likely to prove more interesting than the rite of redeeming the first-born by the substitution of a sacrifice. Upon this subject too the parents were prepared to reply. *All the first-born among thy children, said the lawgiver, shalt thou redeem. And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the Lord brought us from the house of bondage: and when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, the Lord slew all the first-born in the land of Egypt, therefore all the first-born of my children I redeem* \*. And, brethren, I cannot but consider the whole Book of Proverbs as a kind of manual intended to furnish a model and materials for parental instruction in moral and religious subjects. Solomon himself informs us that one great object of that sacred collection is *to give to the young man knowledge and discretion* †: and you may have observed that its maxims are often expressed in the style of the lessons of a pious father or mother to a beloved child:—*My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother. My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not: my son, walk not in the way with them. Hear, ye children,*  
the

\* Exod. xiii. 14, 15. † Prov. i. 4.

*the instruction of a father, for I give you good doctrine; forsake ye not my law* \*.

BUT the province of teaching was extended yet farther than to public characters, and to every father and mother in Israel. Every individual who had been himself religiously educated, and who had attained mature age, was supposed competent to instruct those who were children in years, or in understanding. To be a teacher of the first principles of the oracles of God was what every Israelite claimed as his privilege, while he felt it his duty. *Behold, says Paul, thou art called a Jew, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes* \*.

It appears then that the communicating of religious knowledge was an employment from which none of the members of the Jewish church were exempted, in which they all gloried, and in which every good and enlightened Israelite was, in his

L own

\* Prov. i. 8, 10, 15. iv. 1, 2. † Rom. ii. 17.—20



place, and to his utmost power, conscientiously occupied.

WE have now endeavoured to illustrate the words before us in their primary application. They were written, however, not for the sake of those only to whom they were originally addressed, but for ours also.

It were vain for me, in the audience of this assembly, to spend time in proving that the ancient Jewish church and the Christian are but one true and permanent church under a varied dispensation, and that our religion and the Mosaic, dissimilar as they are in circumstances, are the same in essence. You know these things, and are established in the important truth. Now, as we inherit all Israel's spiritual privileges with much improvement, we must undoubtedly be obligated, in an equal or a greater degree, to the moral duties resulting from those privileges. The obligation to the duties must devolve with the possession of the privileges from generation to generation, perpetually. The text then, stating at once the privilege and the duty of the members of the church, is in both its parts no less applicable to us than it was to God's ancient people. Having *established among us his testimony and his law, he*  
*commandeth*

*commandeth the fathers to make them known to their children.*

I go on, therefore, to consider the text in its application to ourselves, as members of the Christian church. In doing this, I shall

I. Speak of our privileges as a people inheriting God's *testimony and law* :

II. Specify the means by which the knowledge of sacred things is to be transmitted from age to age : And

III. Recommend perseverance in your efforts to transmit religious knowledge by those seminaries which you who are here assembled profess to patronize.

I. *What advantage then hath the Christian? or what profit is there in the possession of the law and testimony of God? Much every way : For*

1. In the *testimony and law* of God all those Truths which are necessary to be known for salvation are revealed. This revelation embraces a mighty compass. It carries our views from eternity to eternity, and from the beginning, through all the periods, forward to the end of the world and time. It shows us the origin, the fall, the recovery,



very, the immortality, and the eternal destiny of man. It shows us the rise, the plan, the purchase, the progress, and the consummation of the salvation of God. It discovers to us the Sovereign of the universe in his most interesting, most awful, and most amiable characters: and the great Mediator who so generously and successfully interposed to redeem the world accurst.

This revelation exhibits truths most singular, and altogether peculiar to itself; truths most mysterious, which had never been known had they not been supernaturally disclosed; truths most sublime, the great things of God, the grand result of his manifold wisdom and abundant grace; truths most interesting, since by them we must be judged; and most beneficial, since to know them is eternal life.

We possess all the revelation which was confided to the Jews, and much more. Ours is far more luminous than theirs, far more extensive, and far more satisfactory to the mind intent to explore those profound and stupendous mysteries *into which the angels desire to look*. By the faint light of prophecies and of types the ancient Israelites descried Messiah afar off, anticipated the meritorious righteousness which he was to fulfil in the latter days, and read the grand characters of that salvation

vation which he was then to achieve. But those things which were shown to them only in emblem, or in dim and distant prospect, are *evidently set forth before our eyes*. The vail is rent in twain, and the glories which lay hid beyond it in the holiest of all are now fully displayed. *The temple of God is opened in heaven, and there is seen in his temple the ark of his testament*. The shadows of the morning have retired from before the ascending day; and the *Sun of righteousness*, arisen at length upon us, illustrates the wonders of the spiritual world.

2. In the *testimony and law* of God the acceptable manner of Worshipping him is clearly and authoritatively ascertained.

Those of our modern infidels who admit the reasonableness of religious worship seem disposed to assert that God will certainly accept from men whatever homage they present to him with sincere hearts. But the assertion is supported by no proof. It is plainly absurd. For, look abroad among the nations who have not the *law and testimony*, you will behold men approaching the Deity with rites of worship repugnant to the light of reason, and to the feelings of humanity. Now, will men's sincerity consecrate their follies and their crimes?

Will



Will men's sincerity reconcile God to what he condemns, and obligate him to accept wickedness as a righteous oblation? Excellent as sincerity is, it is valuable only when it is prompted by knowledge, and productive of what is *holy, just and good*.

In its most improved state, human reason unaided by revelation, could never satisfactorily answer the question most interesting to the man who is conscious of guilt before the Eternal Judge:—*Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? What shall I give for the sin of my soul?*

How great a privilege is it then to learn from God himself in what characters he is to be approached by us; and with what dispositions, with what expressions of homage, and with what hopes we are to adore him?

The Mosaic economy embraced a system of worship wisely adapted to that immature and introductory state of the church. Divine ordinances were then emblazoned with a multiplicity of signs and ceremonies to strike and detain the senses, and the whole exterior of religion was minutely and splendidly elaborate. But from the temple of the Most High that carnal pomp is now banished, and throughout the ordinances of his worship there reigns a dignified simplicity, better suited to evangelical

gelical times. Our rites are plain, and few. Scarcely do any forms obtain but such as are altogether necessary for assisting the attention of the mind, for admitting the body to participate with the soul in adoring the Creator and Redeemer of both, and for conducting social worship with animating harmony and impressive solemnity. Less ostentatious than the ancient system, ours is more spiritual: less calculated to allure the senses, it more exalts the mind: it borrows less from the earth; it is more allied to the devotions of the heavens.

3. In the *law and testimony* of God a perfect system of Moral Precepts is exhibited.

In his state of uncorrupted excellence, man was a law to himself. Turning his attention inward, in his own heart he read his duty. His mind, irradiated with celestial light, ever revealed to him *the good and right way*, and his will was not *disobedient to the heavenly vision*.

But now, human reason, debilitated and perverted, can of itself discover but little of man's duty, and still less of the proper manner of performing it.

In proof of this, consider the state of morality in the most improved places and periods of the heathen

then



then world. How impure and incomplete were the best of their systems! On various topics, it is true, excellent maxims may be selected from them. But even of those the beneficial effect on practice was much less than we may be apt at first to imagine. For the maxims of one famed Moralist were ever contradicted by those of another, whose celebrity conferred on his dictates, perhaps an equal sanction: so that amidst the strife of jarring opinions, and the collision of contending authorities (while there was wanting a common and acknowledged standard of appeal), men fluctuated in perpetual uncertainty, and after all that had been dictated or disputed by others, every one was left to form a scheme for himself, and to regulate his practice by his own conscience, caprice, or corruptions.

All the morality of that *world which by wisdom knew not God*, was essentially defective in this respect, that the best of its precepts could never be enforced by sufficient motives. Those precepts were the sayings of men, not the oracles of heaven: they were friendly advices and expostulations addressed to human prudence, not commands binding the conscience. And whatever arguments from the authority and inspection of the Supreme Being and from a futurity of retribution, could be urged to enforce them, were at best only conjectural,

jectural, and, like the precepts themselves, were repelled by names as respectable as those which advanced them.

It is highly worthy of remark that the wisest of the heathens were the most sensible of the imperfection of their knowledge, and of the deficiency of their means of information, on those subjects which most interest man as a moral and immortal being. It is said that, in the natural world, the gloom of night becomes more deep toward the dawn of day: and of the moral world we may affirm that still as the most eminent of the heathen sages seemed in their search after wisdom to approach the sacred influence of the true light, the obscurities which involved them became more palpable to themselves, and the glimmerings which met them served but to render the "darkness visible." Hence, those of the Socratic school (doubtless the most illustrious class of heathen moralists) used to express an ardent wish, not unmingled with a feeble hope, that God in compassion to the weakness of our bewildered race would commission and qualify some extraordinary teacher to relieve us from our perplexities by discovering to us those things of which the knowledge was perceived to be indispensably necessary to our right conduct and supreme felicity. Thus

M

the



the very men who are most highly and most justly extolled by modern advocates for the sufficiency of reason in opposition to the necessity of revelation, denied that pretended sufficiency, and felt and confessed the need of supernatural instruction.

And, brethren, we will venture to say that, notwithstanding all the sacred knowledge with which revelation has directly or circuitously supplied our present infidels, many of them seem to be as ignorant of the nature, the obligations, and the only true supports of morality, as if they had dreamed in the darkness of Heathenism. Let us hear one of the most conspicuous of these ingenious but vain speculators. "Pleasure or happiness," says he, "is the sole end of morality:" and again, "Morality is nothing more than a calculation of pleasures \*." And he tells us that from this calculation all references to "a world to come" must be "dismissed" as "air-built speculations, which cannot enter into any liberal and enlightened system of morality †." Morality, then, is nothing more than a calculation of present pleasures! And who is to be the calculator? This man, or any other, for us, and for the world, or every individual for himself? Truly, this method

\* Godwin's Enquirer, p. 243, 104. † Ibid. 243.

thod of calculation, this estimate of pleasures from which "speculations upon the chances of a world to come" are excluded, this "liberal and enlightened morality" which recognises neither the existence and government of God, nor the responsibility and immortality of man, has filled the earth, from age to age, with murders, fornications, adulteries, perjury, fraud, rapine, sedition, rebellion, and every evil work. Behold then a moralist who understands nothing of morality: who discerns not its connexion with a Divine Legislator, an Omniscient Witness, an Almighty Governour, a supreme and most righteous Judge, and a future retribution; but contemptuously explodes its most grand and interesting references, its prime obligations and most powerful sanctions! Behold a morality which is referable to no certain standard, reducible to no fixed rules, and enforced by no adequate motives!—a morality which abolishes the essential distinction between right and wrong, which abandons rectitude at the prospect of temporal pain or pleasure, and which tends to extinguish conscience in men, to banish from the world the remembrance of God, and to annihilate those sacred and supreme obligations and restraints which have hitherto been found most efficacious for preserving the order of human society!



society! This morality, which would detach the anticipations, the solitudes, and the interests of man from "a world to come," offers no less violence to human nature than indignity to divine revelation, and is as repugnant to the original and inextinguishable principles of the former, as to the light and spirit of the latter. Most unreasonably it assumes, that those presentiments of "a world to come" which animate and elevate the good, and which ever recoil with dread upon those who are most anxious to "dismiss" them, and who to escape the fears of futurity would gladly resign its hopes; that impressions which have been universal and perpetual among our species,—are not the result of the constituent principles of our frame. This morality degrades man into a most incongruous being, whose noblest capacities and tendencies, whose most exalted hopes, and whose most insuperable fears, have no existent object: a being which Nature (whatever Nature means) most wantonly tantalizes, and cruelly dooms to be the incessant sport of tormenting phantoms. This morality represents the whole moral world as a mighty anarchy; a scene of innumerable wrongs which are never to be redressed or revenged. It "dismisses" those motives which have  
the

the most commanding and salutary influence on the human heart, and those sentiments which are often the sole excitement and support of virtue, and the sole curb and correction of vice. It relieves concealed, enterprising, or triumphant wickedness from its worst terrors, but from suffering goodness it withholds the consolations of hope. It is a morality without truth, dignity, and energy. It is the morality of atheism: and all the sublime virtue predicted from it is but extravagant revery and "air-built speculation."

From such vain dreamers who, *professing themselves to be wise, become fools, and grope in the noon-day as in the night*, let us turn to *the law and the testimony*. In that pure light of heaven we shall see clearly. There we shall behold man as he ought ever to view himself, if he would know his true character and his highest end, his dignity and his dependence, his advantages and his obligations, his worst dangers and his best prospects;—we shall behold man in intimate and eternal connection with God as his moral Governour. There we shall find at once, and without laborious investigation, all the conclusions on the grand subject of morality at which right reason would ever arrive. There our duty is exhibited to us in a clear light, in a narrow compass, in a consistent scheme; dictated



tated by the Supreme Legislator himself, and enforced by every motive which can arise from the grandeur of his majesty, the terrors of his wrath, or the attractives of his mercy. How satisfactory this to the understanding, how strengthening to the conscience, how animating to the heart!

4. In the *law and testimony* a sacred Polity is prescribed to the church. Christianity could not subsist or flourish among men, were there not public and permanent associations of its professors. But associations were useless, and could not be permanent, without order and government. A plan of government, therefore, and rules of administration are, in the scriptures, dictated to the church by its sole Legislator. It is thus organized into a regular society of which all the parts are closely connected and duly subordinated, and rendered capable of useful intercourse and harmonious co-operation; and it is furnished with spiritual means of self-defence and self-purification, by which it can *revenge all disobedience* among its members, and debar or expel from its communion those who would disturb its peace, or corrupt its constitution, its doctrines, its worship, or its morality. The scriptural polity of the church, then, claims our high respect at once for its origin, which

which is divine, and for its end, which is to preserve the sacred community in healthful order and vigour that the truth may be defended and propagated, the ordinances of worship purely celebrated, individual members restrained or reclaimed from transgression, and the religious advantages which are intended to result to the saints from their communion with one another, from the church to the world, and from each generation to its successors, fully obtained.

HAVING thus mentioned our great privileges as a people inheriting God's *testimony and law*, let us

II. Attend to the means by which, in obedience to the high injunction recognised in the text, we are to transmit the knowledge of sacred things to our succeeding race.

I. THE knowledge of sacred things is to be transmitted by a careful preservation and transmission of the scriptures themselves.

Nothing can exceed the punctilious exactitude of the Jews of old and at present in their attentions to preserve the purity of the scriptures confided to them. The consequence has been highly important. By the good providence of God, that people



people have been, and still are the tenacious depositaries of those divine records which detect the vanity of their expectations of a Messiah yet to come, which anticipate their present infidelity, which foretell their miserable dispersion unparalleled in the history of nations, and which contain the best evidences of the truth of Christianity, as a religion which is *built upon the foundation of the prophets*, as well as of the *apostles*, and which only realizes what was predicted, or clearly reveals what was obscurely insinuated, in the *dark sayings of old*. After the era of the gospel, when both Jews and Christians became the keepers of the ancient scriptures, those parties were mutual checks, so that neither, had both inclined, could possibly corrupt them. The Christians equally venerated, and were equally careful to preserve and transcribe the writings of the New Testament. When acrimonious controversies multiplied in the church, there were not wanting men who would not have scrupled to sophistificate the word of God for the purpose of adding its apparent sanction to their own opinions. But to adulterate a book which myriads of individuals in various regions were hourly consulting, and to which jealous and contending sects were perpetually appealing, was plainly impracticable. It was morally impossible, however, that the scrip-

tures

tures could be transcribed times innumerable without any variation whatsoever. This would have involved an endless complication of miracles, not needed, and therefore not to be expected. But though it is acknowledged that the most ancient copies often minutely differ in the reading of the same place, it is no less certain that by all those variations together not one doctrine of religion is shaken or obscured. The scriptures, therefore, as we now possess them, are the undefiled fountain of truth, the genuine standard of religion and morality: and unquestionably, their future corruption may be pronounced impossible.

It belongs to the church in every land to exhibit faithfully their meaning in that language which is most familiar to the people, that the word of God may not be a *spring shut up and a fountain sealed*, but that every man may be able for himself to *draw water out of the wells of salvation*. On the day of Pentecost, when the apostles received the gift of tongues, the listening multitudes, *devout men, out of every nation under heaven*, marvelled, and exclaimed, *How hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born!* Similar is the effect of the faithful translation of the scriptures.

N

Every



*Every man hears the apostles and prophets speak in his own language.*

Long have they spoken very perspicuously in ours; publishing *the name of the Lord God of Israel* in these *Isles of the sea*, and teaching them to wait for the Redeemer's law.

The scriptures thus rendered intelligible ought to be devoutly perused and pondered by us all. Receive them, brethren, and revere them as the production of unerring wisdom, the dictate of supreme authority, the unspeakable gift of infinite goodness. Disperse them also among the poor, the ignorant, and the young. In doing this, you give to the young *the sincere milk* which nourishes the soul: you give to the ignorant the instructions of heaven, which *make the simple wise*: and you give to the poor what is *better than gold*, and what will make them rich and great for ever.

And here I cannot but mention with high approbation, that it is a principal part of your plan to distribute the Book of God *without money and without price* to such of the pupils of your seminaries as cannot otherwise obtain it; and that it is your great object to help them all to understand and remember its contents. In thus leading the children directly to the scriptures, you put them (may I not say?) under the immediate tuition of the apostles and prophets, and of Jesus Christ himself.

self. And to whom should they go but unto him, who bath the words of eternal life?

Persevere then, in delivering to the following race the volume of Inspiration: and, that it may not be to them *a shut letter and a sealed book*, accompany still the gift with your friendly elucidations. Let not the fault be in you if every one of your young disciples becomes not like Timothy, to whom Paul says, *From a child thou hast known the scriptures, which are able to make thee wise to salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

2. The knowledge of divine things is to be transmitted by means of the Public Creed, Confession, or Testimony of the church.

Against public articles of faith many Christians are strongly prepossessed. The prejudice, however, is more against the name than against the thing. Every church has certain religious principles for the basis of its union. It has its discriminative persuasion, expressed in one manner or another, and more or less exactly understood by its members. What has brought them together, what retains them in fellowship, but coincidence of religious sentiments? How is this coincidence discovered but by mutual explanations? Who knows not that the common persuasion of the church is often as rigorously applied in the admission



admission and expulsion of members, among those who condemn creeds and confessions in name, as among those who maintain their utility?

Since every church, then, has its own system of acknowledged principles, it appears unreasonable to condemn an expedient of which the object is merely to ascertain them with the utmost possible precision, and to exhibit them with the utmost possible publicity? By accurately defining and openly propounding its principles, a church practises no imposition upon the understanding or conscience of any man: on the contrary, it affords to every one the greatest advantage for an exact, extensive, deliberate and dispassionate scrutiny of them, and for appeal to them in cases of doubt or dispute. By the rejection of methodized summaries of doctrine a church which intends no concealment or ambiguity gains nothing; but it deprives itself of one of the best means of marking its own changes and improvements, of instructing and satisfying enquirers, of extensively *holding forth the word of life*, and of assisting future generations in *going forth by the footsteps of the flock*.

The abhorrence of public formularies which is expressed by many excellent Christians, is to be referred, most unquestionably to a laudable veneration of the word of God. "Are not the scriptures"

tures" say they "our only rule? are they not perfect and sufficient? Can men express God's truths with more precision than he has done himself?"

For ever inviolate be the supreme honour of the sacred scriptures. But with this, explanatory forms do not interfere. They are not more the rule of faith to us than unwritten creeds are to those who use them: they are merely the statements of our belief. We exalt them not to an equality with the word of inspiration: they only show how we understand it.

"But is it no indignity to revelation that those formularies presume to convey divine truths in terms and modes of expression different from those which are there employed?" None. This diversification of phrase impeaches not the perfection of the words of the Holy Ghost, nor even the accuracy of the translation of them into words of human selection. It belongs to the nature of an explanation. Is it not obvious that how excellently soever any thing is expressed, if men by reason of their own imperfection disagree in their apprehensions of its import, they must explain their sentiments otherwise than by a mere recital of the words of which the meaning is doubted or disputed. If confessions of faith are exploded upon the principle that they exhibit divine doctrines

by



by words, or combinations of words, which occur not in the pages of inspiration; upon the same principle, every written or oral exhibition of revealed truth in terms or phrases differing from those of the sacred records, must be condemned, and Christians must be confined to express themselves on every religious subject by a mere verbal repetition of passages of scripture: a restriction which it were absurd to impose, and impossible to observe. If individuals may state their views of the meaning of scripture in their own manner of expression, pronounced or written, or if a society may do so by the mouth of any of its members, why may not the same be done by a society in records public and permanent, but still subject to revision and alteration.

Farther; the mode of arranging divine truths which is adopted in our Creeds and Confessions implies no reflection on the order in which they are exhibited in the word of God. The order and manner in which it was given forth *in times past to the fathers*, was doubtless the most eligible for the progressive illumination of the church. But if we are commanded to *search the scriptures*, and if we ought to *compare spiritual things with spiritual*, may we not state the result of the investigation and comparison; and display, as well

as we can, the consistency of revelation, the connection and dependence of its truths, and the nature and amplitude of its instructions on those interesting subjects which embrace and influence our duty and our chief felicity? Who ever conceived it criminal to digest a scheme of the duties of morality? What moral precept, what principle of religion, is violated by methodizing the doctrines of divinity? In every church does not he who discourses on a doctrine, or delivers an exhortation, illustrate the one and enforce the other, by this very method of collecting, collating and classing the dictates of inspiration? Is not the mode of systematizing principles introduced into every department of ordinary science, and found greatly subservient to the investigation and communication of truth? Its advantages are the same in relation to the things of God.

Upon the whole it may appear that those who decry Creeds and Confessions practise materially what they condemn. To a certain extent they arrange the dictates of revelation, they explain their sentiments respecting them so as to ascertain a coincidence, and the common persuasion of the society understood by mutual explanations serves as the basis of its union and the terms of its fellowship.

The



The public articles of a church may be improperly framed; and when they are unexceptionable, they are, like whatever is good, like the word of God itself, liable to abuse. They may be erroneous. They may be too few, or too numerous, for a proper bond of ecclesiastical union. Reverence for them may warp some minds in searching the scriptures; and prejudice may receive divine truth, or error in its place, on the authority of human explanations or perversions of them. True:—and with respect to unwritten Creeds, the case is precisely the same. None of the evils result from the circumstance of rendering the principles of a church fixed, definite and palpable, and of *writing them plainly upon tables that he who runs may read them.*

While nothing can be better calculated to repress a wanton spirit of innovation, and to prevent precipitate changes, in a church; nothing can more assist deliberate advancement in sacred knowledge than accurate and authentic memorials of its past progress, and authorised exhibitions of its present views and attainments. Stating the errors which it has detected, abjured and condemned, and the truths which it has ascertained and means to assert, they are of use not only to itself, but to other churches, and to the world at large; and undoubtedly they

form

form the most compendious and satisfactory vehicles for the transmission of its doctrines from generation to generation.

Such authentic documents of principles have ever been highly esteemed by the churches of the Reformation. Never, perhaps, were there more excellent summaries of religious truth than the explanatory standards of the church of Scotland. And here it is pertinent and pleasant to remark, that one of those summaries, and indeed the best of the whole, is expressly intended and admirably calculated for the instruction of the young, and the ignorant. The Shorter Catechism stands high in the first rank of human compilations in the religious world. For orthodoxy, for compression and comprehension, for arrangement and perspicuity, it is a system of divinity second to none. And it is one great object of those seminaries which you have so laudably instituted, and so liberally supported, to make the rising generation thoroughly acquainted with that most excellent help toward the attainment of an accurate and extensive knowledge of the doctrines and commandments of the *law and testimony* of God.

4. THE knowledge of sacred things is to be transmitted by the diligent endeavours of Christians

O

tians



tians to approximate as far as possible, the Actual State of the Church to its model exhibited in the word of God.

A church may retain explanatory standards very consonant to that infallible rule, while in the actual state of its constitution, of its doctrines, and of its managements, there may exist many things highly exceptionable. Thus circumstanced, it is self-contradictory, it belies Christianity, and must propagate its own corruptions of it.

Who can find a perfect church! The excellence of churches, like that of individuals, is but comparative. Among them there is none to which Christ may not say, *I have somewhat against thee*: none in which there are not many things to be amended, and many to be improved; many to be retrenched, and many to be supplied.

But the undeniable fact that there are imperfections in all the churches will justify no man in neglecting to ascertain which is the least chargeable with *denying Christ's faith*, and the most intent to *hold fast his name*, and in declining to support that which he finds intitled to this character. By the scripture, his religious profession, as well as his religious sentiments and his moral conduct, is to be adjusted. His religious profession ranks among the most important of the Christian's concerns

concerns in life: for it involves much of his duty, and influences the whole; and, in particular, is closely connected with his principal and constant appearances and exertions for the transmission of the truths and institutions of Christ. Undoubtedly, therefore, it ought to be the care of every Christian to adopt that profession, of which, after serious enquiry and comparison, his own convictions pronounce, that it is, upon the whole, the most scriptural. Having adopted it, not as perfect, but as the best to which he has access, he must labour in his place and in the meekness of wisdom, to prevent its corruption, and promote its improvement. Discarding that ungenerous and unmanly principle, so unworthy of a friend of Christ, of the truth, and of the best interests of the present and of the rising race, that it is enough for him to attend to the concerns of his own salvation; let him cherish in his soul the *zeal of God's house*. Neither prone to innovate, nor averse to reform, neither childishly fascinated by the schemes of every bold and busy projector in *the house of God*, nor superstitiously devoted to every tenet and observance which has been received by tradition from *the fathers*, let him be in religion at once steady and progressive, let him dispassionately apply all things to the standard provided by Infallibility, let him  
with



with wary perseverance, prompt and encourage the church of which he is a member to dismiss whatever in its constitution or administrations is merely human, to hold fast whatever is divine, and to go on to scriptural perfection.

Differing in many sentiments, in this, I am sure, Christians will all agree, that it is the first duty of a church, and its highest glory, faithfully to exhibit the whole system of evangelical doctrine, and to "receive, observe, and keep pure and entire all such religious worship and ordinances as God hath appointed in his word\*." Now, it is by the accession, the steadiness, the activity, and the influence of enlightened and faithful individuals that the public state of religion in particular societies is to be meliorated: and the progress of each community contributes, insensibly, it may be, and remotely, yet really and ultimately, to the good of the church universal, and of generations yet unborn.

How beautiful would the churches be did they realize their scriptural model, and were the holy zeal and the venerable simplicity of the pure and primitive ages again to appear! It is not by the dereliction of any of the truths or institutions of the gospel, it is by the ascertainment, acknowledgment

\* Shorter Catechism, Quest. 50.

ment and observance of whatever bears the signature of divine authority, and by the rejection of whatever wants that high sanction; it is by the approximation of every church to the pattern delineated by the wisdom of Heaven, that all the churches must approximate to one another, till at last they coalesce into one glorious temple for the residence and worship of *The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*—*O! that this salvation of God were come out of Zion!* and that the dispersed of Israel were thus gathered into one! Such a reformation among Christians of every name, such a blessed healing of our lamentable divisions, such a happy union of the friends of the Redeemer upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone——how mightily would it accelerate the progress of the truth, and the increase of the church! Forthwith would ensue a full accomplishment of that saying which is written respecting times hereafter to be revealed: *Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. And thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night;*



night; that unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and their kings may be brought\*.

4. To the transmission of evangelical knowledge, no mean which a Christian can employ is more directly subservient than a conversation becoming the gospel.

The gospel is a practical institution. It is not given to men merely for speculation or profession, but for the regulation of the mind, and heart, and life. He understands it best, who obeys it most. And he is most likely to be successful in its propagation, who feels its power, who exhibits its spirit in his own temper, and exemplifies its precepts in his conduct.

*A conversation becoming the gospel*, while it renders a Christian the object of just respect, excites attention to his principles, and adds weight to his instructions and exhortations. Without the help of words, it speaks to every heart. It is the most eloquent preaching of the truth, the most severe rebuke of wickedness, the most attractive display of the beauties of holiness, the most forcible pleading for God. Hence said our Lord to those whom he commissioned to instruct the world, *Let your light so shine before men that they may see your*

good

Isa. lx. 1, 3, 4, 11.

good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven\*.

On the other hand, if thy conversation is not such as becometh the gospel of Christ, if in works thou deniest him,—whatever profession thou holdest forth to the world, whatever knowledge beams from thy mind, whatever persuasion dwells on thy lips, thou art not a Christian: whatever good instruction thou impartest, thou dost not expound the doctrine of God our Saviour with the best and most intelligible of all illustrations, thou art ever lying against the truth and propagating most pernicious error, thy deeds destroy what thy tongue builds up: whatever tribute of thy substance thou renderest from time to time to Him who sits enthroned in Zion, all thy pecuniary contributions for his service cannot countervail the King's damage by thy life. Through breaking the law thou dishonourest God, and makest his name to be blasphemed, and the way of truth to be evil spoken of.

5. ANOTHER mean to be used for transmitting the knowledge of sacred things from age to age is prayer to God for his effectual agency in promoting this great object.

The cause of truth and righteousness is the cause

\* Mat. ix. 16.



cause of God as well as of humanity, and for his own glory he will prosper it. But this he will do only in his appointed manner;—in answer to the prayers of his people as well as by means of their labours. *I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel (saith he) to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock; and they shall know that I am the Lord* \*. The apostles were taught to accompany their exertions among men, with their daily prayers to God, for the progress of Messiah's kingdom. The same method must still be pursued by us, if we would promote his cause. *For him, says the scripture, (for the advancement of his interests and glory) prayer shall be made continually.*

In our prayers to God for the transmission and diffusion of evangelical truth, the most pertinent petitions which can be preferred, and the most cogent arguments which can be employed to enforce them, are supplied by his own promises, in which he most solemnly engages to preserve and extend the knowledge of it among men. Recollect how he spake in vision to his Holy One; *I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations, and the people shall praise thee for ever and ever. My Spirit and my words shall not depart from thy seed, nor from thy*

\* Ezek. xxxvi. 37, 39.

*seed's seed. And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times* \*. Hear his promise to the church, *In righteousness shalt thou be established: and all thy children shall be taught of the Lord* †. Those, especially, into whose minds you wish to instil his truths, the young and the ignorant, have the promise of divine instruction. *Whom shall he teach knowledge? saith the prophet, and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. And in that day the deaf shall hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness* ‡.

Such are the promises which encourage us to frequent the throne of God with our earnest supplications for the propagation of sacred knowledge among the rising race, and which ought to inspire our petitions, our arguments, and our hopes. And, brethren, if the fervent prayer of one righteous man is of much avail with God, if Christ has said, *When two of you shall agree upon earth as touching any thing that ye shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father* §; what might not be expected from the influence of multitudes of the

P sons

\* Psal. xlv. 17. Isa. lix. 21. xxxiii. 6. † Isa. liv. 14, 13.

‡ Isa. xxviii. 9. xxix. 18. § Mat. xviii. 19.



sons and daughters of Zion, all striving by concert at once, apart or socially, at their Heavenly Father's throne, with unanimous, cordial and incessant importunities, for an object so glorious, and so interesting to heaven and earth, as the perpetuation and prevalence of the truths and interests of the Redeemer?

As a mean subservient to the transmission of evangelical knowledge, prayer unites high and singular excellencies. Of all means it is the most efficacious; for it engages the aid of Omnipotence: and it is that which may be the most easily, and the most generally employed; for it may be used by persons of every age and sex and condition, in every place, and at every time.

*Ye, therefore, that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. For Zion's sake do not hold your peace, and for Jerusalem's sake do not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.—“Have respect unto the covenant, O God: arise, and plead thine own cause: Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness †.”*

*Finally,*

\* Isa. lxii. 6, 7. 1. Psa. lxxiv. 22. xlv. 3, 4.

*Finally,* The knowledge of divine things is to be transmitted to the succeeding race by the direct and formal communication of instruction to them.

There are various methods by which the communication may be made. But there is none more effectual than catechizing, which deservedly holds a very distinguished place among the exercises in your seminaries. It is recommended by its brevity, deliberateness, and perspicuity. We come instantly to the subject to be considered: it is resolved into distinct parts, and each of these is propounded separately, and in the shortest and simplest form. In the most customary method of instruction in public (which has nevertheless its own advantages and proper objects) the speaker advances without the certainty that he is followed by his audience; but in this, the deficiencies of each disciple are soon manifest, and the teacher knows to what precise point he must direct his explanations. In that, the mind is more passive, and in those who need instruction the most it is most apt to become torpid, or to wander; but in this, the direct query, and the necessity of reply, compel attention and recollection. The learners feel a lively interest in the progress of the exercise, because each is particularly addressed, and brought forward into action. The recurrent pauses, the alternate interrogation and



and answer, the demurs and solutions, the quick transition from topic to topic, and from pupil to pupil, are circumstances which attract, relieve, and rouse the youthful mind. The variety renders the exercise pleasing and impressive, and therefore profitable. No method can be more calculated to discourage negligence, which it so soon detects, or to inspire ardour of application, which it so soon discovers by its fruits.

THE communication of religious instruction belongs to persons of various descriptions. Ministers of the Gospel are the most conspicuous, but not the only labourers in God's vineyard. The head of every family has his own more limited plot for culture. His situation requires him to exert his authority and influence for the spiritual as well as for the temporal benefit of his domestics. His children demand his chief care, and he must *bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*. Presiding in his family as its ruler, he must also preside as its priest directing the worship of God, and as its prophet dispensing sacred knowledge.

And would to God that not only the heads of families,

families, but *all the Lord's people were prophets*\*, possessing and diffusing the knowledge of evangelical truth! What we said of the ancient Israelites will fully apply to Christians. Every one who has had the advantage of early instruction, and has attained mature age, every one especially who is admitted to the highest privileges of the church, ought to be qualified, and ought to account it his honour, as it is his duty, to be *an instructor of the ignorant and a teacher of babes*. Such was evidently the judgement of the inspired writer of the epistle to the Hebrews; whose general unproficiency in knowledge and consequent incapacity to impart it, drew upon them that severe reproof *whereunto ye do well that ye take heed:—When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again, which be the first principles of the oracles of God*†.

BRETHREN, of the plan which you have adopted, and are prosecuting for the instruction of the rising generation, this is one conspicuous excellence, that it affords opportunity for every person, and for every talent, to come forward into regular and effectual

\* Numb. xi. 29.

† Heb. v. 12.



effectual operation, and combines all for propagating around you the light of heavenly truth.

LET none among you, then, stand aloof from this laudable undertaking. Here there is scope for the exertions of all. And there are few by whom some substantial good may not be done. Arise, O Christian, whosoever thou art, and perform thy part.—Where is the man endowed with wisdom among us? Let him come forward, and assist by his counsel in suggesting and maturing plans, and by his prudence in superintending the execution of them.—Where is the man of knowledge and utterance? Let him not disdain the honourable occupation of directing the minds of young immortals to the wonders of God's law, and of teaching them to sing hosannas to the Redeemer.—Where is the man in opulent or easy circumstances? and where is the man with the few mites? Let each contribute *according to that which he hath: let him lend to the Lord, who will repay*, and who estimates every donation by the liberality of the heart.—Where is the man of eminence and high respectability among us? the honourable magistrate who presides among his brethren, and watches over the public good? the useful citizen, his country's ornament and strength  
and

and benefactor, who employs and rewards the industry of numbers around him? Let them come forward, and at least lend their great influence to encourage attendance on these beneficial institutions.—And where is the man of prayer? He is not the feeblest of our auxiliaries, nor the least honourable. He is the man who has influence with God. Let us have his interest at the throne of the heavens for that  *blessing from the Eternal*, without which our undertaking cannot be prosperously conducted.

THUS let the energies of every one be exerted to promote the grand object of your association. Let each be active, *one after this manner, and another after that, as every man hath his proper gift from God*; and let all be helpers of one another, and strive together, *that the generation to come may know the testimony and law, which God has established in our land.*

To encourage your perseverance in this great and good undertaking was the

III. And Last thing proposed to be done in this discourse.

But here, brethren, your own animated zeal and chearful exertions preclude my expostulations  
and



and persuasions. I shall, however, briefly mention several considerations which may prompt you to go on as you have begun, and to *abound more and more.*

I. THEN; Lift up the eyes of your minds to the heavens, and consider *The High and Lofly One who inhabiteth eternity*;—

What can I urge of weightier import, or of more irresistable force to persuade the prosecution of these your efforts, than that they are directly and eminently subservient to his glory; to promote which is the chief end and the chief honour of man. By their instructive exhibition of the vestiges of his perfections, all his works in all his dominions praise him: you contribute to exalt and enrapture the universal song; you aid the voice of nature by the powers of reason, and the powers of reason by the light and fervours of religion, when you teach *babes and sucklings* to adore and obey him.

Consider his authority requiring such exertions. Is not his command as obligatory on Christians as it was on the fathers of Israel? on you as it was on Asaph, when, in obedience to it, he *opened his mouth in a parable, and uttered dark sayings of old?*

Consider

Consider God's distinguishing goodness to you in *establishing* among you his *testimony and law*; and let every generous principle within you be roused to activity. Recollect and repeat the grateful acknowledgements of the ancient church:—*He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgements unto Israel: Praise ye the Lord. God is the Lord who hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar* \*. And what is the most acceptable sacrifice of thanksgiving which thou canst present, O man, to that high Benefactor to whom thy *goodness extendeth not*? It is to imitate him in his diffusive beneficence, which is operative from age to age. It is to advance those grand designs which he is ever prosecuting as the author of salvation. It is to become the minister of his grace by propagating the sacred light and the joyful sound of the gospel.

From God thou hast received thy own kind and proportion of gifts. Duty and gratitude require thee to apply them to the purposes for which they were bestowed. Can they be better employed than in the service of him who gave them? What can be more reasonable in itself, what more honourable to thee, or more pleasing

Q to

\* Psal. cxlvii. 19, 20. cxviii. 27.



to thy God, than that thou do good to men according to the measure of the gift which thou hast received from him as the God of nature, of providence, and of grace?

2. CONSIDER thy own Character as a Christian.

Calling thyself by that sacred name, canst thou be indifferent to the honour of Christ, and the interests of Christianity? If thou art, thou claimest a character not thine own. *He that is not with me, says Christ, is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad* \*. If thou art not indifferent, canst thou expect a better occasion for shewing thy love and thy zeal than what these institutions now present?

Call to mind thy promises and thy vows, to appear and act for Christ, and to do what in thee lies to perpetuate the remembrance of him among men. Now thou art brought to the test. Now falsify or fulfil thine engagements. Now prove thy fidelity or thy perfidy.

Call to mind thy daily prayers that the Redeemer's name may endure for ever, and that race unto race may praise him. By what means

\* Matth. xii. 30.

dost thou expect those prayers to be fulfilled? By human agency, no doubt. And dost thou intend to take no part of the honour and the burden of the work to thyself, but to resign the whole to others, and idly to look on? Ah! if those desires which dictate thy prayers for the advancement of religion, cannot rouse thyself into activity in its service, be assured they never will reach the throne of the heavens, and may be spared without detriment to the cause of Christianity.

But if the amiable and benign spirit of that religion has indeed been imbibed by thee, it will animate thee with *good-will toward men*; it will prompt thee to wish for others what thou wishest most for thyself, and to impart to them the best that thou possessest,—*the excellent knowledge of Christ*.

3. CONSIDER the Nature of the external Privileges of the Church. They are all a Trust; and must be retained, used and transferred, according to the Donor's will. They are not your absolute property; but the Church's patrimony,—*the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob*, entailed upon it from generation to generation. Of all those privileges, the children (according to the spirit of the text) are constituted heirs with the fathers, and the fathers depositaries for the children. Brethren,



thren, they are now yours in unrestricted possession; but the entire reversion belongs to posterity. He who gave those privileges to you, gives to your children a claim on you for the conveyance to them of the whole of the hereditary benefit. You have then great advantages for yourselves, and if you be wise you may be happy; but you have also a great charge for others, which demands faithfulness, and infers responsibility. Of the whole of the patrimony of the church you are usufructuaries, and you are no more. You have a right to avail yourselves to the full of all your privileges; and it is your duty, as it is your interest, to do so. But you must not lose them; you must not adulterate them; you must not impair them: nor suffer them to be impaired, adulterated, or lost: but must transmit them undeteriorated to your successors\*.

4. To animate your exertions, consider the benefit which they are calculated to produce to the children who are the objects of your care.

In your seminaries they receive the most important instructions. *That the soul be without knowledge,*

\* Deut. xxxiii. 4. 1 Tim. i. 11. vi. 20. 2 Tim. i. 14. ii. 2. Jude 3.

*ledge, says Solomon, is not good.* In a state of gross ignorance, it is benumbed and depressed; its noblest energies slumber; it rises not to the highest exertions, pursuits, and enjoyments to which it is destined by its make. Every kind of liberal and useful knowledge, it is true, exalts the soul. There are, however, many sciences and arts of which men may be ignorant without much inconvenience. But ignorance of those things which interest them as moral and immortal beings is pregnant with the most ruinous mischiefs. *Through this ignorance they are alienated from the life of God, and destroyed for ever.* You labour to prevent the direful effects by removing the cause. *Making known to the children the law and testimony, you acquaint them with that which converteth the soul, and giveth to the young man knowledge and discretion, and teacheth him to cleanse his way, and guideth his feet into the paths of peace.*

Often, indeed, the illumination of the mind in sacred things is unaccompanied with the sanctification of the heart and life. A course of religious instruction, however, can scarcely fail, of some good effects. It prevents, at least, those errors and miseries which originate in mere ignorance. It produces, for the most part, a sense of propriety which has no small influence on decency



cy of conduct. Salutory impressions upon the conscience it always makes by furnishing that inward monitor with materials for direction and reproof, and familiarizing it with those motives which must ever operate, in some degree, as restraints from vice, and incentives to virtue.

Must obviously, your instructions will dispose the children to attend the house of God with regularity, and with reverence; and will prepare them for profiting by the labours of ministers in their public discourses, which can be but ill understood by those who are unacquainted with *the first principles of the oracles of God*, and with the terms in which the doctrines and duties of religion are expressed.

Your friendly instructions may eventually promote even the temporal advantage of your pupils. While they are learning, under your tuition, the rudiments of religious knowledge, useful habits of attention, of reflection, of enquiry, and of diligence may be produced, and their minds may acquire an elevation and enlargement, a taste and direction, which they would not otherwise possess, and which may prove highly beneficial to them through the whole of life, by determining them to the honourable pursuit of laudable objects. Perhaps, the high prosperity of Solomon may

may be traced to the indelible impressions, and powerful influence of early instruction. His parents, as he himself records, had sedulously inculcated upon him the preference and pursuit of wisdom, as *the principal thing*; and when all that is highly esteemed among men was in his offer, wisdom was his choice, and *in her hand she brought him riches and honour*.

It is to be presumed, that in prosecuting your pious endeavours, you shall be instrumental in promoting the eternal good of many of those concerning whom it is said, *Of such is the kingdom of heaven*. While you are shewing to them the divine law and testimony, God himself may open their understanding and their hearts, and with the word heavenly wisdom may enter in, and the *grace which bringeth salvation*. And, *know*, says the scripture, *that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins* \*. O glorious argument to stimulate activity, and support perseverance in *showing to men the way of salvation*!

Perhaps, the desired effects of your exertions may not immediately or not soon appear. Yet, be not discouraged. After lying dormant in the  
soul

\* James v. 20.



foul through a tedious length of wintry gloom and torpor there, the good seed which you have sown may at length revive, and spring up, and prosper into a copious harvest of the fruits of righteousness. *Be patient, therefore, brethren. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and bath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.*

Upon the whole, most reasonably may you hope that the pupils of your seminaries shall derive substantial benefit from your exertions. In respect of some individuals, it is possible, though scarcely supposable, that your benevolent purposes may be wholly defeated. But it is not to be doubted that, to a very great proportion of them, real advantages, differing however in kind and degree, will redound. Where little positive good ensues, much evil may be prevented. Where the highest effects are not produced, those of a subordinate kind may take place. And, where no beneficial consequences are presently discernible, they may appear in future days.

5. PERSEVERE in your labours, for they contribute to the good of Civil Society.

You cherish all the social virtues in the hearts of the young. You teach them to cultivate the principle

principle of sincerity (the first of social virtues, and the basis of all the rest), to speak truth, to fulfil promises, to venerate an oath; to honour their parents, to love their associates, to reverence good men, to *rise up before the hoary head*; to be sober and regular; to be industrious in their callings, and honourable in their transactions; to be compassionate to the afflicted, and generous to the poor; to *speak evil of no man*; to forgive injuries, and to remember them only to repay them with acts of beneficence; to be good neighbours, faithful friends and partners, kind relatives, just servants, masters, or governours; to *be subject, for conscience sake, to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to honour the king*; to *meddle none with them that are given to change*; and to *seek the peace of that city, or land, in which they dwell, and to pray unto the Lord for it.*

Convinced that religion is the best preservative of public order and tranquillity, wise legislators and governours, in every age and place, have endeavoured to cherish a sense of it upon the minds of men. The worst imaginable religion, embracing necessarily the great commanding principle that man is the subject of God's moral government, is, in itself and in its consequences, infinitely better than none. And if, from the influence

R of



of what was good even in false religions, very salutary effects have resulted to society, what advantages might it not derive from the full operation of the true, which inspires far more just and impressive convictions of the majesty and rectitude of God, and of man's responsibility to him; which powerfully tends to purify the principles, and to humanize the dispositions, of the heart; and which, in the name of the Parent of the universe, addresses all the families of the earth as brethren, and inculcates love and peace?

For the love, then, which you bear to the best interests of your country, and as a proof that you consult them with a patriotism truly enlightened, continue to support institutions of which the grand object is to promote that *righteousness which exalteth a nation*; to fill the future walks of life with men who shall be ornaments to their stations, and blessings to the community; and to counterwork and proscribe ignorance and irreligion, which are the worst traitors in every state, the best partizans of every crafty demagogue, and the most fruitful authors of public confusions, crimes and woes. You are the friends and ministers of a reformation, in its progress noiseless and harmless, in its means *holy, just and good*, and in its nature inclusive of whatever

suberves

suberves the utmost practicable improvement of the moral and political world.

6. PERSEVERE; for your seminaries are conducive to the good of the Church.

Affociating persons of different religious persuasions in the same generous designs and exertions, they produce Christian intercourse, banish prejudices, promote brotherly love, excite godly emulation.

Of old, when *God's servants* began to take pleasure in the stones, and in the dust of Zion,—(when builders appeared among her desolations)—the observant Psalmist, anticipating the speedy arrival of an auspicious period, joyfully exclaimed, *The time to favour her is come* \*! So now; such combinations of Christians in the cause of Christianity, augur well for the church, and accelerate that prosperity which they announce. It is but little indeed that any individual can do for the general interests of religion: but when all are in exertion, the result may be glorious. When the tabernacle was to be reared in the wilderness, every heart throughout the tribes of Israel was open, and every hand was active; materials poured from every quarter into the

\* Psal. cii. 13, 14.



the sacred treasury, and were as fast prepared; the work rapidly advanced; and soon, amidst the wide encampment of the great congregation, the tent of Jehovah arose and shone *like a high palace*. After the return from Babylon, when Jerusalem was to be restored, every man did something towards its re-establishment; he *repaired over against his own house*, or wherever his services could be best applied; and, with successful expedition, *the wall of Jerusalem was built even in troublous times*.

Nothing seems better calculated to prepare the way for a more general harmony of sentiment among Christians, and for their more extensive union upon scriptural principles, than associations, like yours, for promoting the honour of our common Lord, the knowledge of our common faith, and the best interests of the rising generation; associations which dispose Christians to receive, without jealousy, mutual conviction and improvement; associations in which the *law and testimony* of God is perpetually held up to the succeeding race, as the only infallible source of information and standard of appeal, in matters of religion.

AND who can tell how far the blissful effects of your exertions may be felt? Perhaps, while you are contributing to the benefit of the church at home,  
you

you are also kindling up a light which shall soon enlighten the Gentiles, and preparing messengers to bear the glad tidings of salvation to the ends of the earth!

7. To incite perseverance in your laudable undertaking, consider the Character and Aspect of the Times in which we live. Never were times more eventful and critical, never were appearances more singular and interesting, in the political or in the religious world.

You behold, on the one hand, infidelity, with dreadful irruption, extending its ravages far and wide: and, on the other, an amazing accession of zeal and of activity to the cause of Christianity. Error in all its forms is assiduously and successfully propagated; but the progress of evangelical truth is also great. The number of the apparently neutral party daily diminishes; and men are now either becoming worshippers of *The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, or receding fast through the mists of scepticism into the dreary regions of speculative and practical atheism. It seems as if Christianity and Infidelity were mustering each *the host of the battle*, and preparing for some *great day of God*. *The enemy is come in like a flood: But the Spirit of the Lord bath*



*both lifted up a standard against him. Who, then, is on the Lord's side? Who?—Let him come forth to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.*

Again; as the present are times of tremendous calamity to the nations around us, they are to ourselves times of great difficulty, and, perhaps, of great imminent danger, which nothing but our return to God by righteousness can avert. What if we were to affirm that by exerting yourselves in the cause of religion and virtue with unabating and increasing ardour, you do more for the lengthening out of our tranquillity, and the establishment and advancement of our prosperity, than you could do with your sword, or your spear, or all the weapons of war? If those means of defence are good and necessary, as undoubtedly they now are, I am sure that the protection of God is far better, and that without this they can avail us nothing. Now, *righteousness exalteth a nation* to an honourable alliance with Heaven, and sheltereth it behind the shield of Omnipotence. Whatever, therefore, promotes righteousness, must be regarded by every man who believes a Providence, as a part of the national defence. And, were institutions and exertions like yours more general throughout our land, our hopes for the public  
safety

safety might proportionally rise, and our fears subside. To convince you that I do not enthusiastically over-rate the consequence of such pious endeavours to communicate *instruction in righteousness*, read with me in The Second Book of Chronicles, the seventeenth Chapter, from the seventh verse, how the wisdom of God connects the safety of Judah with similar exertions in the days of good Jehoshaphat:—*In the third year of his reign he sent of his princes, to teach in the cities of Judah. And with them he sent Levites, and priests. And they taught in Judah, and had the book of the law of the Lord with them, and went about through all the cities of Judah, and taught the people. And the fear of the Lord fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah; so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat.*

8. In thus disseminating religious knowledge among the young and ignorant, you are following the most illustrious Examples which can be proposed for imitation.

May I not say that JEHOVAH himself was a Teacher of babes, when from the top of Sinai he proclaimed the memorable words of the fifth commandment;—*Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God*



*God giveth thee?——Whom did he then teach knowledge? and whom did he make to understand doctrine? them that were weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts.*

Was not the Divine Redeemer, while he sojourned on earth, an instructor of children? Did he not pronounce them the subjects of his kingdom? Did he not invite their approach; and take them up in his arms, and bless them?

And, if you demand great examples from among men subject to like passions as we are,—behold Abraham, and the most honourable of his sons!

The father of the faithful had this testimony from God (and observe that it was the sum of the divine encomium), *I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they will keep the way of the Lord, to do judgement and justice* \*.

Mighty kings who sprung of him gloried in publishing the law and testimony to their youthful subjects. *Come, ye children*, said the founder of that renowned race who swayed the sceptre in Zion, *come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord* †. Such was David's grow-  
ing

\* Gen. xviii. 19. † Psal. xxxiv. 11.

ing conviction of the importance of this service, that, toward the end of his days, he desired to live chiefly for the sake of performing it. In this he wished to employ all the accumulated experience of a long illustrious life, and to expend the latest vigour of his declining age:—*O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not: until I have shewed thy strength to this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come* \*. His immediate successor, the wisest and most splendid of monarchs, while he was in the prime of his life and in the full glory of his reign, sought out, and set in order many Proverbs, to give to the young man knowledge and discretion: and, when he was about to quit the stage of public usefulness, he concluded the last of his labours as a Preacher, with serious and salutary exhortations to those who were in the days of their youth †.

If you look into the New Testament, you will find the apostle of the Gentiles acting as a preceptor of little children, and addressing them with precept upon precept ‡.

S

In

\* Psal. lxxi. 17, 18. † Eccl. xi. 9. xii. 1, &c.

‡ Eph. vi. 1—3. Col. iii. 20.



In the primitive ages of Christianity, as is ascertained by the most authentic documents, great attention was paid to the religious instruction of the young and the ignorant. They formed a distinct order in the church: and were known by the name of Catechumens, or pupils who were trained by catechetical discipline. Into this order, the children of Christians were early initiated. They were distributed into classes, according to their proficiency. And Catechists were appointed to assist their progress through the several gradations of their novitiate till they rose into complete fellowship with the church. It is time that so useful an institution were revived among us, or its advantages produced by substitutes like those which you have provided.

In every age, indeed, a zeal for transmitting the knowledge of divine things has, in some degree, existed and operated among the sincere followers of Christ. But for this, his name must have perished from the earth, and your privileges would not now be what they are. Your ancestors conveyed them to you at the hazard of their lives, and the expence of their blood. For you is reserved the easier task of making them known to your successors by your practice, and your instructions. He who feels no interest in the trans-

mission

mission, may extol the heroism of those who, in almost every period of Christianity, have been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held; but is himself a man of another spirit. He is not likely to endure much for righteousness' sake who will not even open his mouth to utter the ancient mysteries, nor lend his aid that the generation to come may know them.

Animated by examples so numerous and so great, let us adopt the resolution which Asaph formed for himself, and recommended to his contemporaries:—*What we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us; we will not hide from their children.*

9. To encourage your perseverance in this great and good work, recollect the Promises which assure the church that efforts like yours shall be made, and shall be successful.

In the scripture, we are taught to indulge the hope that from age to age many Asaphs shall arise to emulate their worthiest progenitors in transmitting to posterity the knowledge of the things of God. *One generation shall praise thy works to another; and shall declare thy mighty acts; and shall utter the memory of thy great goodness, and sing of thy righteousness, and make*  
known



*known to the sons of men the glorious majesty of thy kingdom. The fathers to the children shall make known thy truth. Instead of the fathers shall be the children. A seed shall serve him, and shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born †. To the accomplishment of those great and precious promises, your seminaries directly, eminently and obviously conduce. They bring together the present and the rising generations under this precise consideration of each, that the one are now the full possessors, and the other the heirs apparent, of the church's privileges; and for the express purpose that the former may declare to the latter the testimony and law which God commanded the fathers to make known to the children.*

It is to be regretted that hitherto many private Christians of eminent endowments have been less directly and statedly instrumental in fulfilling those promises of good to the church, and less extensively useful in transmitting sacred knowledge to their successors, than they were fitted to be. They were not called forth to the important and honourable work for which they were well qualified. There were none, or there were but few,

† Psal. cxlv. 4, 7, 12. Isa. xxxviii. 19. Psal. xlviii, 16, 22, 30, 31.

few, to whom they could extend the benefit of their instructions. How zealous soever they might be to proclaim God's righteousness and his power to every one to come; and to say to the hopes of the church, "*Come, ye children, hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord: O magnify the Lord with me, let us exalt his name together: he is our God, and our fathers' God, and we will praise him:—*" they were constrained to repress the sacred impulse by the dread of incurring the reproach of ostentatious singularity. Their talent for communicating knowledge to the young and the ignorant, lay dormant; and was lost to the church. For this evil, however, your institutions present an easy, adequate and unexceptionable remedy. Consistently with the strictest order, the church may, by means of them, avail itself of the gifts of its wisest members, and of the good of the most comfortable of the divine promises, for the spiritual benefit of the lambs of the flock.

BRETHREN, in a period wherein many of the most illustrious of the divine predictions relating to the public state of Christianity are receiving a rapid and wide and wondrous fulfilment, how cheering is it to remark that even your humble institutions and efforts are singularly calculated to verify one of the



the most important classes of promises to the church, and that they plainly coincide with the most conspicuous of the present high operations of providence, and subserve the most benevolent of its designs!

All around us we now behold in the divine administrations many unusual, interesting and sublime appearances, movements, and tendencies; in the most ominous and the most auspicious, in the most afflictive and the most felicitating of which the man of spiritual discernment easily recognises the counterpart of those important prophecies which respect the introduction of the last and best and most extended age of the church, and of the world. A vast and complicated work of God is evidently in progress toward a grand, though possibly, a remote consummation. The subordinate agents are many in number and widely spread; often totally unconnected or avowedly hostile; and their characters, like their departments, are greatly diversified.

By terrible things in righteousness, the mighty fabric of superstition which has so long overshadowed the nations and disfigured Christianity, is shattered through its whole extent, and shaken to its foundations; its pillars tremble; it totters to its fall: and the ruinous convulsion

has

has been effected by most profligate instruments, who knew not the work of the Lord, nor understood his counsel.

While the denunciations against Antichrist are thus awfully realized, the predictions which secure positive good, and general prosperity, to the Redeemer's kingdom, are also come in remembrance before God: and to fulfil these, he has roused the zeal of *the generation of the righteous*. Of this class of gracious predictions, some secure to the church the enlargement of its boundaries, and others, the advancement of its internal illumination and purity.

For the accomplishment of the former, men endowed by God with the spirit of holy and more than heroic enterprise, are now traversing land and flood. They go forth in the name of JEHOVAH to plant Messiah's ensigns where Satan's reign has been undisturbed for ages, and to convey the light of the truth far into the gloom of *the shadow of death*. Already, *they sing unto the Lord a new song from the ends of the earth;—they cry aloud from the sea;—they shout from the top of the mountains, and declare his praise in the islands;—and gladden the untutored people of the wood and wilderness with the sounds of salvation.*

The promises respecting the internal illumination

tion



tion of the church are likewise now receiving a more remarkable fulfilment than in the days of our fathers. Multitudes of the fearers of God are on all hands eager and active to prepare the way for that glorious period of light and joy when the sons and daughters of the church, from the greatest to the least, shall understand and *utter the dark sayings of old*, and shall *sing together in the heights of Zion*. Among this honourable company, you have taken your station, and your work,—intent to fulfil at once God's promises and his commands, by replenishing Zion with knowledge and with righteousness.

Encouraged by those divine promises of which you are the ministers, as well as constrained by the divine command, go on in the good work which you have undertaken, confidently saying, *God hath spoken in his holiness, we will rejoice: the Lord is our helper we will not fear: the God of heaven will prosper us, therefore we his servants will arise and build* \*.

10. STILL farther to animate your exertions, consider the Good which will accrue from them to Yourself.

Subjected

Psal. lx. 6. Heb. xiii. 6. Neh. ii. 29.

Subjected to peculiar and not inconsiderable labours, the brethren on whom the care of instruction is immediately devolved have superiour encouragements. You improve while you employ your gifts. Dispensing knowledge to others, you augment your own store. Musing and discoursing on God's law, its wonders will unfold and brighten to your view, and oft-times your hearts will *burn within you*. In the seminaries, your best dispositions will be meliorated: for all around you, among your pupils and your associates, you will see none but lovers and friends. Your constant exertions for the good of immortal souls, will perpetually recal your minds to your own eternal concerns: and while you are *teaching the children the fear of the Lord*, you will be learning it yourselves.

Of old, temporal benefits were promised to those who diligently performed the duty in which you are engaged \*. Still *the life that now is*, and—*things present*, are promised to the faithful people of God. And what can be more natural than to suppose that hereafter among your pupils some of you may find grateful benefactors, who will rejoice to repay your spiritual with their carnal communications?

Here, I cannot but remark that the employment

T

ment

\* Deut. xi. 19. 21.



ment of teaching in your seminaries may be highly profitable to those young persons who are consecrating themselves to the office of the ministry, and may prove an excellent preparative for their usefulness in that more extensive and public sphere. Among the children they will feel the importance of inculcating the *first principles of the oracles of God*, and learn to feed with milk those who cannot bear strong meat. Frequent exercise of speaking may produce habits of easy utterance; and a perspicuous manner of expression may be best acquired where there is a necessity for *using great plainness of speech*.

Brethren, in whatever form you lend your aid to these benevolent institutions, if your zealous exertions are inspired by Christian principles, *verily I say unto you, you shall not lose your reward*. Is not a recompense promised even to him *who shall give unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple*? In performing our duty we are not, it is true, to be mercenary; yet it were at once undutiful, ungrateful and foolish, not to remember, or not to feel, those motives by which divine liberality invites and invigorates our obedience.

While you are prosecuting your undertaking, you enjoy the blissful consciousness of well-doing.  
And

And your present exertions will abide reflection, and will please in the retrospect. Will they not be more than recompensed when you shall behold from time to time in the house of God numbers of worshippers who, by your means were taught to understand his truths, and to celebrate his praises? and when you shall behold in the world sober, industrious and worthy men whose characters and habits you, as the instruments of divine grace, contributed to form? In future and perhaps not distant days, how will it delight you when *the blessing of him that was ready to perish cometh upon you*! And at last, when you are about to join the innumerable congregation of the dead, it will not repent you to have served God thus in your generation, and to have sown seeds of righteousness which may be flourishing among men when you are forgotten in the grave.

But you shall not be forgotten by God. For he has reserved beside him, in the world to come, a great reward for those who now honour him by promoting religion. *They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever* \*.

Heaven

\* Dan. xii. 3.



Heaven grant that none of you may have reason to say in respect of your success among the pupils of your seminaries:—*We have laboured in vain; we have spent our strength for nought, and in vain.* But though that were true, you shall sustain no loss. The high reward of grace is annexed not to the success, but to the intentions and the exertions, of the workers of righteousness. *I have laboured in vain*, said the prophet, personating and prefiguring one greater than himself, *I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain; Israel is not gathered; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my reward with my God* \*.

*Exalt wisdom, then, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee* †.

IN THE LAST PLACE, Let me urge your strenuous perseverance in supporting your religious seminaries from the consideration of the Character and Circumstances of this the Place of our Residence.

For knowledge, for religion, for the generous spirit of its inhabitants, as well as for the ingenious and

\* Isa. xlix. 4, 5. Prov. iv. 8, 9.

and useful arts of life, its reputation is high. In every liberal exertion for the interests of religion, or of humanity, you have long been exemplary. Your missionary efforts deserved and obtained every distinguishing applause. Those who were best able to appreciate them pronounced, that upon a comparison of circumstances, they were not exceeded in Britain. Of late you have had occasion repeatedly, to manifest your zeal to relieve suffering humanity. Still you supported your character: and what the fires had consumed, your liberality promptly restored \*.

With your usual spirit you instituted the Sabbath Schools. With your usual spirit you have hitherto encouraged them. You have begun well:—go on, in the name of the Lord; and prosper.

Besides

\* This refers to some very liberal contributions which were lately made in Paisley, for the benefit of a multitude of persons whose houses and effects had been destroyed by fire. At one time 30 families, and a few weeks afterward, sixty, saw their habitations suddenly ruined. The wise and humane scheme of combining the efforts of Christians of all denominations for the relief of their suffering brethren by contributions at all the churches on the same days, was suggested, and, in the first of those cases, the execution of it was superintended, by the gentlemen who were then in the magistracy.



Besides the necessity, universal at present in these lands for such institutions, and arising from the ignorance of some, and the negligence of others, whose duty it is to communicate domestic instruction; in this vicinity, the unintermitted employment of multitudes of children in mechanical labours on all working days, and the great influx from the more unenlightened parts of the country of families in which the parents are no less ignorant, and more indocile, than the children, render your schools for sacred instruction, and your pious efforts to support them, eminently expedient and beneficial. Go on, therefore, in the name of the Lord: and prosper.

Already, the good effects of your exertions appear. Many young persons are now more religiously occupied at home than they were before. It is said that from your schools they have carried reformation into some of the families to which they belong. Our streets are more tranquil on the Lord's day. Numbers of those who infested them are now to be seen listening and learning in your seminaries. There, FIFTEEN HUNDRED CHILDREN, are enquiring after God, and *waiting at the posts of Wisdom's doors*. Multitudes of these manifest no small ardour to acquire

acquire religious knowledge, and to engage in devotional exercises: and who would not wish to cherish such happy and hopeful beginnings? Go on, then, in name of the Lord; and prosper.

Go on in the name of the Lord. The work which employs you is most honourable, and most worthy of sacred ardour. Your expence and exertions are as nothing, when compared with the ends which are pursued, and the effects which may be produced. You are forming the minds and morals of those on whom all the concerns of church and state are soon to be devolved, and who are to be the possessors of the world, and the instructors of future generations of men, when you are slumbering in the dust. You are labouring to extend and perpetuate upon earth the innumerable and inestimable blessings of the *Gospel of peace*.—And what shall I say more? While you are bringing sinners to the Saviour, while you are showing to immortal beings the path of eternal life, are you not contributing to people the heavens, and to cause new joy among the angels, and to accent the songs of all the blessed around the throne of God?

TEACHERS



TEACHERS and SUPERINTENDENTS, suffer from me the word of exhortation.

The command to teach, implies a command to learn. Be diligent then to make advances yourselves in the *knowledge of the mystery of Christ*. In the dark sayings of old, gloriously illuminated now by posterior revelations, there is enough to employ, and to repay, all your enquiries. Seek especially that knowledge which is experimental and saving; the feeling of the sanctifying power of the truth.

*Deliver to the children nothing but what you have received from the Lord*: for you are commanded to make known to them, not the opinions or traditions of men, but the *law and testimony of God*.

Let me recommend to you condescension and meekness in discharging your trust. Be gentle among the little disciples, *even as a nurse cherisheth her children*.

You have need of prudence, of patience, of perseverance: for instruction must be instilled into the tender mind as it is able to admit it; and that the children may be *taught knowledge, and made to understand doctrine, precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line*. You must,

must, as is said in the text, *make the things of God known to them*. You must endeavour to communicate to them more than the sound of words, and the forms of reply. Like the good teachers in Nehemiah's days, you must *give the sense, and cause them to understand the law* \*.

To your instructions and exhortations add prayers, both in the presence and in the absence of the children, for their advancement in knowledge and in goodness. In this you have for your examples the inspired teachers of Christianity, and our Saviour himself. Having concluded his last address to his disciples, he followed it with ardent and appropriate supplications. Lifting up his eyes to heaven, he said, *Father; I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth* †.

Let your practice illustrate and enforce your instructions. Exhibit in your life the beauties of holiness: and walk in the light which you diffuse around you. So shall none be able to taunt you with that proverb of reproach, *Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself* ‡.

In one word, let each of you, in his place, imitate Ezra; of whom it is said that he *had prepared*  
 U his

\* Neh. viii. 8, 7. † John xvii. 8, 17. ‡ Rom. ii. 21.



*his heart, first, to seek the law of the Lord; and, then, to do it; and then, to teach in Israel statutes and judgements\*.*

PARENTS and HEADS OF FAMILIES; the injunction on the *fathers to make known the law and testimony* to their succeeding race, applies with peculiar force to you in your domestic relations.

In your families, you must promote religion and virtue, and repress vice, by the exertion of that authority which God has committed to you. Abraham commanded his children and his household to fear God and follow righteousness. Mine eyes, says David, shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way shall serve me. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight\*.—To the force of authority add the gentler and more efficacious influence of good example. If you wish your families to serve the Lord, you must determine like Joshua†, to lead them on yourselves; and, like David‡, to walk within your house with a perfect heart.—Farther, neglect not family instruction; an exercise which you will find no less pleasant to your

\* Ezra vii. 10.

\* Psal. ci. 6, 7. † Josh. xxiv. 15. ‡ Psal. ci. 1, 2.

yourselves than profitable to those whom providence has entrusted to your care. I will appeal to such as conscientiously discharge this duty, if any moments of their lives flow on with more pure delight than those in which their children and domestics are around them, hearing and enquiring concerning the *great things of the law*.—And, if you would not counteract the influence of your family instructions, maintain in your households the worship of God. With what consistency or effect can you teach your domestics to acknowledge him in all their ways, and in all things to make known their requests to him by prayer and supplication; how can you tell them that it is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto the name of the Most High, to shew forth his loving kindness in the morning, and his faithfulness every night: if your dwellings are not temples wherein is heard thanksgiving, and the voice of melody; and if therein prayer is not set forth before God as incense, and the lifting up of the hands as the evening sacrifice?

The incapacity of heads of families for domestic duties of religion is for the most part criminal, the disinclination to them is always so. Resolutely begin;—and you will find *the way of the Lord* to be strength, and pleasantness, and peace. There are none who cannot in some form express their desires to



to God ; none who cannot impart to their children some religious instruction or advice : and your feeblest attempts may be followed by the happiest consequences.

On your countenance and exertions, parents and heads of families, the good effect of the Sabbath Schools much depends. You must endeavour to prepare the children, and you must excite them to prepare themselves, for the sacred exercises in which they are there occupied.

Even those of you who enjoyed not the benefit of religious instruction in early youth, may do much to promote the improvement of your children at these seminaries. In the very want which you deplore you may find motives to prompt you to encourage their diligence, and arguments to animate them in their preparations and attendance.

Heads of families who are neither ignorant nor indolent, may avail themselves of these seminaries as helps ; and will perceive them to add new energy to the application of their children, and new speed to their progress.

They are, however, intended not to supersede or obstruct, but to stimulate and second, your exertions at home. And it is pleasant to know, and to tell, that among us such has been their happy influence

influence on domestic education, that parents are not more remiss but more assiduous to instruct their children, and children not less but more disposed to seek and receive instruction from their friends or parents, than before their commencement.

O ye CHILDREN ; the commandment recognised in the text is also for you. For if it be the duty of the *fathers* to teach, no less must it be the duty of the *children* to learn. To attend to the means of religious instruction is, therefore, one of the first things which God requires of you *in the days of your youth*.

If you have parents who are able and willing to instruct you, learn of them in your own habitations. If you are sent to these schools, be punctual in your attendance on them, orderly when you are present in them, diligent in your preparations before you go to them, and, when you come out of them, return quietly home, and recollect and repeat the things of God which you may have heard in them. Reverence your instructors. Live in harmony among yourselves : and wherever you meet, meet as friends. But shun the company of those naughty children who despise God, and Christ, and the scriptures, and good



good men, and good advice: and learn not of them their words, or their ways.

Let your behaviour every day, in every place, and in every company, show that you profit by the Sabbath Schools.

*Remember your Creator in the days of your youth;* and, *Obey your parents:* for on these two commandments hang all the duties of children. Still recollect, that God is present wherever you are, and knows whatever you think, and hears whatever you say, and sees whatever you do. The heavens and the earth declare his glory; but his character, and his will, are best learned from the holy scriptures, which are his own words. Read them, and hide them in your hearts, and they will make you wise, and good, and happy. Believe his promises, in which he offers to you the richest blessings, as free gifts. Obey his commandments, in which he tells you what is your duty. Pray to him every day, for he has said, *they that seek me early, shall find me.* Trust in Jesus Christ, and he will save you with an everlasting salvation.

If you have lost your parents, remember that God is the *father of the fatherless, and the orphan's stay;* and commit yourselves to his care, and he will teach, and guide, and keep you, and raise up friends to help you.

LET

LET me now, in conclusion, briefly address the MEN OF THE PRESENT GENERATION, in general: all of whom the text includes in the class of *fathers* whose duty it is to make known the word of God to the children.

Perhaps, there are some of you, brethren, who are so far from being able to discharge this duty to your inferiors in years, that you are yourselves utter strangers to the elements of Christianity; and who are so far from giving diligence to gain sacred knowledge, that you are blessing yourselves in your ignorance, and deceiving your own souls with the miserable sophistry—That if you know less than others, you have less to account for. But have you not known? have you not heard? has it not been told you from the beginning, that *this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light.* Of this be assured, that it is criminal to be ignorant of what you ought to have known, and might have known; and that for such ignorance, with all its consequences, you are accountable, and condemnable. Voluntary ignorance of the word of God, will not excuse your inattention to his proclamations of duty in the law, or of grace in the gospel. You are the  
persons



persons of whom it is said in the scriptures, *They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness. I have written to them the great things of my law, but they were accounted as a strange thing.* And if, while your present disposition continues, you promise yourselves impunity or happiness from the eternal Judge, you are blessing those whom God has not blessed. Think not that you shall reach heaven with shut eyes and careless hearts, or that, from the darkness in which you have chosen to dwell, you shall ascend into the purest light of God. Beware lest that come upon you which is written in the prophets, *It is a people of no understanding, therefore he that made them will not have mercy upon them, and he that formed them will show them no favour. For that they hated knowledge, and did not chuse the fear of the Lord: therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. Because I have called, and ye refused; because I have stretched out my hand, and ye did not regard; but set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh. Then shall ye call upon me, but I will not answer; ye shall seek me, but shall not find me. The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the*  
gospel.

*gospel* \*. Ashamed of your ignorance, and alarmed at the tremendous and irrecoverable ruin into which you are stumbling, open your eyes ere you lift them up in endless despair! *Acquaint now thyself with God, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee. Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thine heart* †. *If thou hidest his commandments with thee; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and lifteth up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God* ‡.

BUT there are multitudes among us who are destroyed, not for lack of knowledge, but by the abuse of it! They possess it; they can impart it: but they rebel against the light: greatly resembling in character and conduct that perfidious race stigmatized in this psalm;—who kept not God's testimonies, and his covenant; and believed him not, and trusted not in his salvation; but tempted him in their hearts, and were not estranged from their lusts §.

X

Take

\* Isa. xxvii. 11. Prov. i. 24, &c. 2 Theff. i. 8, 9.

† Job xxii. 22. ‡ Prov. ii 1, &c.

§ Verses 10, 18, 22, 30, 31, 56.



Take heed that you resemble them not also in their doom! Alas! what will it avail you to know much, and to *instruct* many, if you *hold the truth in unrighteousness*.

Persisting in your secret or open trespasses, learn assuredly that whatever are your professions of devotedness to God, he disclaims connexion with you; and that whatever is your zeal to propagate his truths, he disdains your services. *Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or to take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee\*.*

Let the awful declaration of him to whom all judgement is committed rouse you to flee from the wrath to come:—*In the last day, many will say unto me, Lord, Lord, Hast thou not taught in our streets? have we not eaten and drunk in thy presence? have we not prophesied in thy name? to whom I will profess, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity. And then it shall be more tolerable for those who have sinned without the law than for you who have known the way of righteousness, but have turned from the holy commandment.*

Take the benefit of thy own knowledge, and be wise for thyself, O man who art instructed out of  
the

\* Psa. l. 16, 17.

*the law.* No longer rebel against the light around thee, and within thee. *Obey the gospel. Mix the word with faith. Receive the truth in the love of it that thou mayest be saved: And treasure not up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.*

AND now, lastly, let me turn to you who both know the things of God, and do them; who have received his testimony, and set to your seal that he is true; who build upon his promises hopes which rise to heaven; and who delight greatly in his commandments, and are *the undefiled in the way.* You are the true Israel with whom he has established his covenant: and of whom he says, *They shall be taught of me: I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: I have formed them for myself, they shall show forth my praise.*

Gratefully adore *The Father of lights* who has made you wise to salvation. Never forget his precepts, for with them he hath quickened you. Hope to the end: for not one good word which he has spoken shall be unfulfilled. By patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, and honour, and immortality. Building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy  
the



*Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.*

Surely you must be ever disposed to obey the great command which we have been enforcing. Surely you must feel it supremely your duty, your desire, and your delight, to propagate that gospel which has been to you the *word of life*; to bring sinners to that Saviour, whose *grace* has been to you *exceeding abundant*; and to *show forth the praises of that God who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.*

AND now, blessed be the most High God for so early establishing *his law and testimony* in these isles of the sea; for enabling our fathers to transmit the privileges of the gospel to our times and to us; for favouring us with unmolested liberty to profess and publish his truths; for exciting among our contemporaries, in our own and in other lands, an ardent and active zeal to promote the interests of Christianity; and for uniting your hearts and exertions, as at this day, to make known the doctrines of his holy word to our succeeding race!

May they arise and declare them to their children; and may their children tell another genera-

tion:—that *they may set their hope in God, and not forget his word, but keep his commandments*; and that race unto race may praise him, and proclaim his wondrous works, as long as the sun and moon endure!

**FINIS.**



# A P P E N D I X.

## RISE AND STATE OF THE SABBATH SCHOOLS IN PAISLEY.

(WRITTEN BY THE SECRETARY.)

IN the month of November 1797, some private Christians in Paisley conversing upon the subject of religious education, and understanding that Sabbath evening Schools were erected in different parts of the country, were of opinion that something of the kind among themselves was highly necessary. They met several times for the purpose of consulting one another upon the most proper mode of promoting a plan that promised to be attended by the most beneficial effects. Nothing, however, of consequence was done till the subject was mentioned in the Missionary Society, and warmly recommended by some of the members. The Society agreed to request the different Sessions in town to inform the Prayer meetings in their connexion, that a consultation with all who wished well to the erection of Sabbath Schools was intended.

Accordingly, on the 26th of December, a numerous meeting was held in Mr. Bell's School room. Having  
chosen



chosen a Preses and Clerk, they took into consideration a few hints of a plan, and unanimously resolved, that something of the kind was both necessary and practicable. To modify and bring forward some rules for the regulation of their future meetings, and the conduct of the Schools they intended to open, they appointed a Committee of thirty-five persons, chosen from all the large congregations in Town, besides the ministers of these congregations.

The above Committee met in the Low Church Session house upon the 5th January 1798, and agreed to the following

**RULES for the Erection and Support of SABBATH EVENING SCHOOLS in PAISLEY.**

1. The Members to consist of all those who signify their intention to support the institution by subscribing the following regulations; or by inserting their names in a book kept for the purpose.
2. The necessary Funds to be raised by Subscription and voluntary contribution of all who wish well to the institution; or by collection at the church doors on certain occasions.
3. The Society shall chuse a Committee to meet the second Monday of every month or oftener if necessary.
4. The Society shall meet the second Monday of January annually to chuse a Committee, a Treasurer and Secretary, and report the proceedings of the preceding year.
5. The

5. The Secretary shall take minutes of the proceedings of every meeting of the Committee.
6. The Committee shall use every prudent measure for bringing forward Teachers of sound principles and genuine piety.
7. They shall appoint two of their number to visit each School occasionally.
8. If such visitors observe any thing amiss in the mode of conducting the Schools, they shall endeavour to get it rectified.
9. The Committee may occasionally order religious books as premiums to the children to be distributed by the teachers or visitors according to the attendance, behaviour and proficiency of the Scholars.
10. Every meeting to be begun and ended with prayer for the Divine blessing upon these means of instruction afforded to the young and rising generation.

**RULES for conducting the SCHOOLS.**

- I. The sole object of these Schools shall be religious instruction.
- II. In the neighbourhood where each School shall be opened a Committee of the friends of religion may be chosen to meet occasionally, superintend the School, and attend regularly by rotation in order to assist the Teacher.
- III. That every meeting of a School be begun with a short course of praise and prayer.—The usual exercises to be reading and repeating portions of scripture and instruction.



tion by Catechizing. The whole to be concluded with a short advice, prayer and praise.

IV. That the children shall be divided into Classes according to their capacity and progress—and the Teachers shall see that regular attendance be given.

A meeting of the friends of the plan was again held in Mr. Bell's School room on the 16th January, when the above was laid before them, and adopted as the rules of what they agreed to call THE SOCIETY FOR ERECTING AND SUPPORTING SABBATH SCHOOLS IN PAISLEY. The same Committee was desired to continue for a year and meet monthly according to the rules.

Several teachers having offered their services, it was agreed to open seven schools in different parts of the Town. To each of these, six neighbours of approved characters and knowledge were chosen as an assisting Committee, with power to increase their own number as they should find it necessary.

It was suggested that a Sabbath Evening Lecture might be preached occasionally, the collection to be applied to the purposes of the institution. To this the ministers present agreed, and Sabbath 4th February was appointed for the first of these Lectures, when intimation should be given from the pulpits respecting the design of the Society, and the time of opening the Schools.

When attendance was given on Saturday evening the 16th February to receive the names of children intended for the Schools, such numbers appeared that it was found necessary immediately to double the number of schools, so that

that upon the second or third Sabbath there were fifteen, in which about 1200 children attended. About the end of April there were twenty schools and 1495 children.

At the meeting of the Committee in September there were 27 Schools—Children 1526.

Sums collected at the High Church at Six Evening Sermons, as follows :

February 4	-	-	-	-	L. 24	2	8½
March 25	-	-	-	-	19	5	5
April 29	-	-	-	-	20	17	4½
July 1	-	-	-	-	24	0	6
September 25	-	-	-	-	15	1	11½
November 25	-	-	-	-	16	0	5½
					L. 119	8	5

The Society have expended as follows :

For Bibles to the poorer Children,	L. 41	2	8
—Printing Watts' Preservative from the			
Sins and Follies of Youth,	-	12	4 0
—Catechisms for poor Children	-	1	8 8
—Janeway's Token,	-	2	8 0
—Early Piety,	-	2	10 8
—Rents, Candles, &c. for all the Schools	11	8	7
L. 71 2 7			
Balance in the Treasurer's hands,	L. 48	5	10

As



As there are various items of expence incurred for Candle, Coals, and Rent not yet charged, it is probable, the present balance will not be more than sufficient to discharge them. But as Christians of the different denominations highly approve of the institution, and of the good effects resulting from the exertions of the Committees of instruction, there is little reason to doubt the contributions will be equal to the expenditure.

THE General Committee have it in agitation to erect Schools for the instruction of young persons of both sexes above the age of fourteen. The subject has been frequently before them, and it has been agreed, that such Schools shall be opened as soon as convenient in the spring. Two Schools are also intended in which instruction shall be communicated in the Gaelic Language, for the benefit of those not sufficiently acquainted with the English.

WILLIAM CARLILE, Preses.

Paisley, 30th Nov. 1798.

W. MCGAVIN, Secretary.

## SCRIPTURE DEFENCE

OF

### CHRIST'S SUPREME DIVINITY.

BY WILLIAM THOMSON, A. M.

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL AT OCHILTREE.

1 TIMOTHY, iii. 15, 16. — *The pillar and ground of the truth. And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh—*

A I R:

PRINTED BY JOHN & PETER WILSON,

M,DCC,XCIII.